

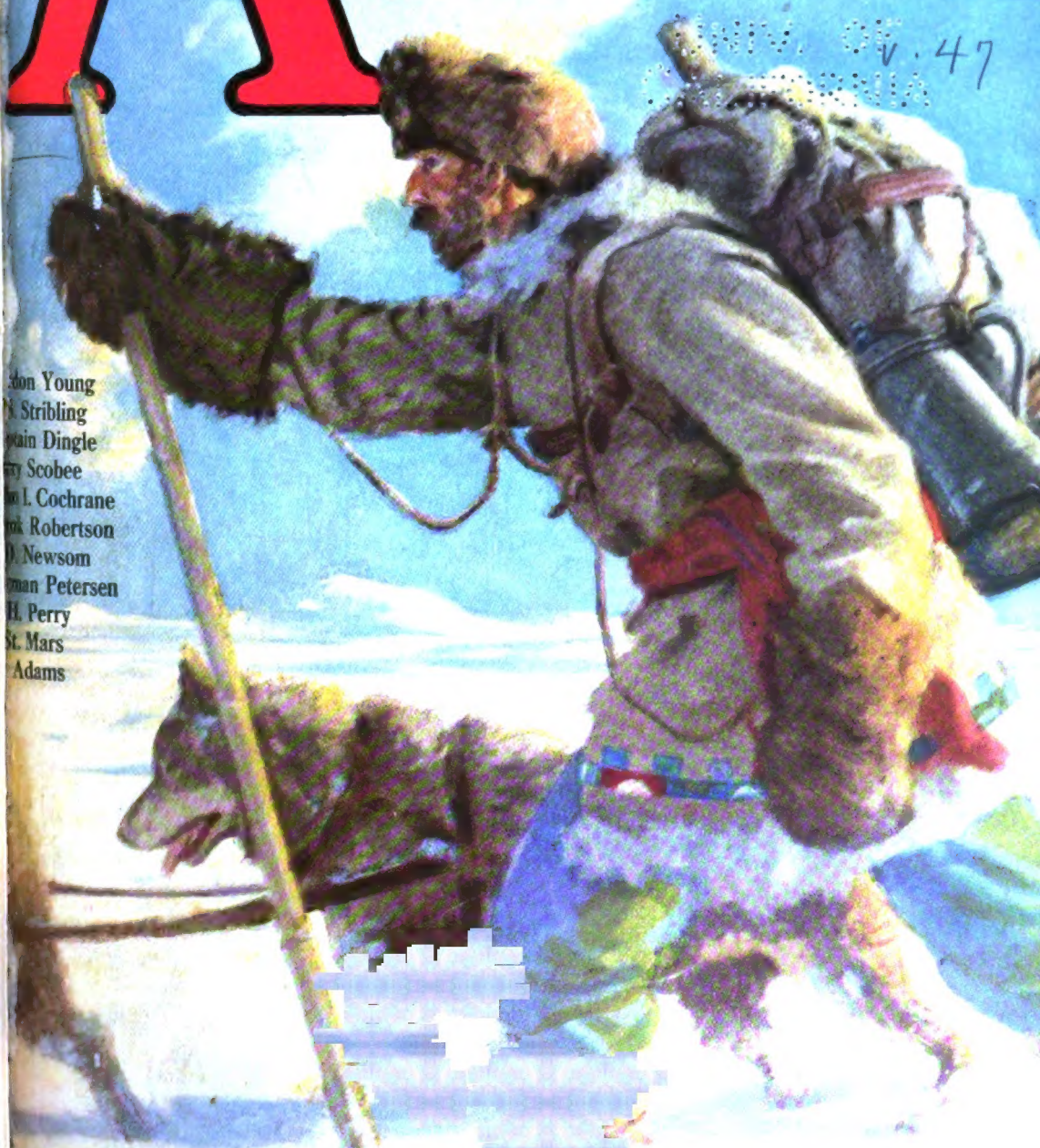
JUNE
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THREE TIMES A MONTH

Adventure

Vol. 47
No. 1

Edon Young
Stribling
Dain Dingle
Scobee
I. Cochrane
Robertson
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Adventure

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June 10, 1924
Vol. XLVII No. 1

Published Three Times a Month by THE RIDGWAY COMPANY

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One Complete Novel and One Complete Novelette

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WORN from lack of sleep, the little group of American soldiers holding the communication trench await the onslaught of the Germans in the first gray of dawn. The sergeant, the gunners and *Goop* the wild man peer nervously forward while they stiffen their upper lips. "A MORNING CALL," a complete novelette by Leonard H. Nason, in the next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

Adventure is out on the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month

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June 10, 1924 Vol. XLVII No. 1



A Complete
Novelette

Everhard and the Russian Count by Gordon Young

Author of "Ointment-Pots," "Battling Bulch Gets His," etc.

MY FRIEND C. H. Durenne was the sort of man that most popular novels are written about, particularly when written by women. Even his name, Conrad Hungerford Durenne, had a fancy sound, as if it had been rather laboriously thought out by some one of romantic taste. He was tall, very handsome, wealthy, cultured, gallant, something of an explorer—thoroughly the sort to make a good fiction hero. But nevertheless, in some ways he was not a bad fellow.

After my acreage of semi-desert land in Southern California which, in an inheritance tangle, had been apportioned to me following the death of an upright and respectable uncle who would rather have starved than give me a crust, had developed into oil property, I took what is called a duplex apartment in the Wellesley. Duplex means double, and in this case no doubt

referred to the rent. Durenne had an apartment on the same floor. His must have been a triplex, if there is such a thing. But he had a gorilla for a valet and probably wanted plenty of room to keep out of the fellow's way.

I have not lived practically all my life on the inner edge of the underworld—which is why my numerous upright uncles and aunts have wished that I would starve—without knowing a crook when I see one.

Durenne was idling away some night hours in my apartment. I said to him—

"Among the people who know that fellow Josephs better than you do, he is what is called a *strong arm*."

Durenne was reaching forward from the depth of a big deep chair to crush his cigaret stub in my bronze ash-tray. I don't smoke, but the bronze ash-tray was a part of the furnishings. The Wellesley was said to have the finest furnishings in Los Angeles,

which no doubt was true. What I paid for one year's lease should have paid for them and left something over for dividends.

As I said that, Durenne paused with hand half out and gave me a steady look; then without crushing the cigaret, dropped it and began lighting another—one of those punk-stick sort that are called Turkish.

"You are wrong, Don. Wrong!" he told me. "Joseph Josephs isn't much in the way of beauty, but he has been with me the past two years and in some pretty tight places. I'd trust him as much as any man alive."

Something over two years before Durenne, who had money, restlessness and a bit of scientific interest, had started off to see what he could find on the Upper Amazon. He had shot some big game in Africa, done a little wandering about in the interior of India, and, growing restless again, had turned his eyes toward South America.

"You ought to know," I said. "But it looks to me like Josephs had put in the past two years in prison rather than in the tropics."

Durenne dropped his cigaret and bent hastily to get it off the rug. He straightened up, laughing a little, and from the corners of his eyes gave me a long glance as he said:

"You may not like the police, but you should have been a policeman. You are that suspicious and—and ready to make your deductions fit your prejudices. I told you that Joe and I were down with the fever—both of us. I don't look very bronzed myself. It doesn't take long to acquire a prison pallor when you are in bed. And—" he was rather in earnest now—"we both feel pretty much knocked out, yet. Don't want to do anything but lie around like this—" he stretched himself out in the chair, closing his eyes—"smoking and half-asleep."

Pause.

"But Joe is out to the Stadium tonight. Went to see the fight. He used to be quite a fighter himself."

"Well, I had supposed that a fellow with two crumpled ears and a face like cartoonists put on their burglars had done something besides lay out silk shirts and screw in pearl studs for a young gentleman of leisure!"

Durenne smiled at me through smoke. Rather a good poker smile, he had. We had met over a poker table years before. One of the players being a very poor cheat, there had been a rumpus out of which

Durenne and I had emerged together on the winning side. Since then we had been very good friends, though I had explained to him that he must not undertake to slap the face of every man who could manipulate the cards, and had given him momentary paralysis by showing what a really skilful sharper could do. But he believed what he heard from those who knew me well, which was: That I trimmed sharpeners at their own game and that an honest man was better off in a game with me than almost anywhere else, because, if there were crooks in the game, I usually took care to see that they had bad luck. Part of what he had heard was true; anyhow, he believed all of it.

But about that fellow Josephs who had acquired a prison pallor in bed: Queer illness, I thought, that would leave a man some two hundred pounds of muscle, a bull's shoulders and a chest like a packing-case. He had a clipped head, a pitted though not quite pock-marked face, dark, sharp eyes and hands like a boiler-maker. Durenne himself was rather bleached out, a little thin, but he always had been thin; and about the only illness I saw in him was something very like laziness. He stayed much indoors, occasionally going for a ride in the evening when it was cool. Most of the time he lay around, reading books he sent out for. Most of these books were on South America; but for one so recently there, and so much interested in the country, he had little to say of it. Always before when he came back from trips he had been an eager talker.

Durenne now looked at his watch. It was a little after nine.

"Well, Don, I think I'll toddle along to my downy couch. Feel sleepy."

He stretched his arms and yawned, but the yawn was not convincing. He got up, walked to the decanter, poured himself a small drink. Then—

"For a fellow who doesn't drink, you keep a mighty good line of bottled goods!"

He laughed. That was his little joke. And because for several days he had been trying to make me curious as to where the supposedly excellent whisky came from, I had a very good idea where it did come from.

"That burglarious valet of yours sneaked it in to keep you from dying of thirst when you were loafing here."

"So?" He lifted his eyebrows, but smiled. "How could Joe have done that?"

"The other night while we were having the bit of cold supper in your room, you wanted a book you had forgotten. You asked me for the key and sent your Jo-Jo after it. The next morning you came in and discovered that my decanter was full of whisky. I hadn't noticed. Good whisky, you called it. You are a bold fellow and all that, but I don't believe you would have tried any mysterious liquor these boot-legging days unless you knew where it came from."

"What a wonderful detective you would have been!" he laughed, trying to make fun of me.

"If I were, the first man I would arrest would be your valet—and have his fingerprints checked."

I said it, not because I was really serious—for some of my very good friends have their finger-prints on file, a few of them are, so to speak, on file themselves, are numbered and pigeonholed themselves—but because I had found out pretty quickly that, under his poker smile, Durenne was just a little uneasy when I talked about Josephs being a crook. But he stood up for Josephs:

"Any man that's been through what we have together—I'll trust him. Good night, Don. Maybe I'll get a little sleep tonight. You healthy wretch, you don't know what insomnia is."

"No. My conscience is clear. I don't suck cigarets, or meddle with that stuff."

I pointed at the decanter.

"Your conscience!"

He blew smoke at me.

"You've shot more men than a Mexican bandit! Gambler and gunman! Oh, I've got clippings, all nicely saved. Besides, I've seen you myself—conscience!"

He looked at me with amused pleasantness, perhaps really trying to figure out how a man who had done the things I have done and been credited with doing, could talk of conscience. But I can talk of it. It is the thing that has been with me through some twenty years of rather troublesome life. I never did anything that I thought was wrong, and I usually tried to do what I felt was right.

After a pretty bad smash-up in an underworld haunt, some years ago, in which many people were much worse hurt than I, and some of them were buried, a chief of police

who was no friend of mine said impulsively that, after all, I had never shot a man who didn't deserve to be hanged. He nearly lost his office for that remark; but it was one that my friends took up and repeated. I have had to get out of the way many times, take long trips to foreign countries and be quiet, until this or that affair was half-forgotten. That phrase about never having shot a man who did not deserve to be hanged probably did more for me than anything else that was ever said. It was not only true, but it could usually be shown before any coroner's jury that I had shot in self-defense. I saw to that. Being able to shoot with either hand, from any position, vastly helped the charm that was supposed to protect my life; and I didn't propose ever to be hanged for shooting a scoundrel whose hands were empty. That was why I had so much trouble with so many people; they, one after another, kept thinking that if they could get a gun out first they had an advantage. They didn't. I am not blind. And very few days of my life ever went by in which I did not practise a bit of marksmanship and snap shooting. More than that, I never touched tobacco or alcohol, and no man ever heard me use an oath.

Now, out of the match-box on the ash-tray I took two matches, and with them between the thumb and forefinger of each hand I held them at arm's length before me and brought their ends within an eighth of an inch of each other, and held them there, steadily, without the least visible motion.

"If you had nerves like that you would sleep well o' nights," I told Durenne. "You try it."

He took the matches and held them out. The ends weaved about each other. He could not hold them still, or anything like still.

"You mean," he said, tossing them into the tray, "that if I had nerves like yours I would sleep well o' night. You're so healthy you're disagreeable. Besides, you ought to teach Sunday-school. How many Sunday-school teachers are there who never smoked, or took a drink—or cussed a little? I never thought I could have any use for a man who didn't."

"What do you know of Sunday-schools?"

"Oh—why, there was a time when I had to listen to a sermon every——"

He stopped, broke the cigaret between his fingers, dropped it.

"In some prisons," I told him, "attendance of religious service is compulsory. Ask your Jo-Jo, I think he knows."

"Say, what the — are you driving at? You keep on hinting more and more that I—that Josephs anyhow is a convict. What do you mean? You're not trying to be serious, are you?"

"Not very. As long as I like a man I don't care how many prisons he has been in. There are some things about Josephs that I rather like. I believe he would stick in a tight place for a friend. But you had better let him read some of those books on South America. He knows very little of that country."

Durenne looked at me doubtfully; then he said quietly:

"I don't know what you think you're driving at. He has been with me the last two years, and in South America. He could tell you a whole lot, if he wanted to. Why have you been questioning him? What have you been trying to find out?"

"I haven't been questioning him. I don't question anybody unless it is my business. But on one of the tapestries in your rooms there is a picture of an elephant. He pointed at that one day when you were out for a minute and said that in South America he had seen lots of those—elephants. I said—

"You mean Africa?"

"He said:

"No, right there in South America. I've never been in Africa."

Durenne laughed.

"Ho, ho, he told me about that. He was joking. He said you looked funny. He has a queer humor."

"Yes, as when he filled my decanter."

Smiling, Durenne waved his hand.

"Good night—good night, Don. You ought to have been a detective. You reason just like one. So-long, old man."

He went out. I closed the door and wished him merry dreams.

I know when a man is joking. Women—I don't know much about women, except that their foot-prints lead to trouble. But I even know when a man is pretending to joke, desperately pretending. Over a poker table one studies human nature, faces, reads the slightest muscle twitch, knows the line and curve of every smile, and learns somewhat to know what is going on behind a

mask inflexible as a dummy's face. All my life I have scrutinized men's faces, and though I may not know precisely what is written there, I know something of what the writing is about. I knew that Durenne lied, but did not at all blame him for lying, when he said that Josephs had been with him in South America.

I pulled a chair around, back to the light, and took up my book about Roman Emperresses whose evil lives were very fully described. At a distance of some two thousand years I did not mind becoming acquainted with the ladies.

For a book-mark I had used a letter. I now reopened the letter and glanced through it, pleased. Some time before I had taken one of my nephews—he was going to the dogs along the jazz route—by the scruff of the neck and flung him out into Death Valley to turn into a man or die, according as to whether or not he had stuff in him that was worth saving. I had given him into the keeping of an old desert rat of a miner whom I had been grub-staking. The boy had turned into a tough, hard-working fellow; the magic of the desert had got into him, and he had lost his desire for the painted ladies of the Great White Way. Two hundred miles from a railroad he and old Kunz had uncovered what they thought was a gold mine—or would be if they could only get some help with the work. Young Don, having come to the edge of the desert for supplies, had written me this letter. It was full of good spirit and courage:

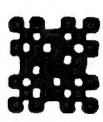
We can't get even Mexicans to come out on that forsaken spot. I don't blame them, but I love it there. I get more of a kick out of hunting gold than ever I did out of chasing around in town, spending money. Old Kunz is desperate to get some help with that mine. You had better come out and go to work yourself. See what it has done to me! A burro stepped on me the other day, then went around limping—I'm that hard. We need seven or eight good huskies on the end of a pick and shovel out here. Kunz says there is a million in sight, but maybe there'll be two or three million if we can dig down twenty or thirty feet. You understand, of course, that I mean million tons of rock—not gold. Kunz says there is some gold in the rock, but I'm afraid it will stay there if we have to do the work. Kunz is a great old fellow. He shot the head off a rattlesnake at twenty paces yesterday. You'd better come out and see if you can hit a rattlesnake at twenty paces. If we could get you out here we'd put you to work. On the level, I'll pay ten dollars a day for good men—though Kunz says four dollars is enough. I would pay my ten dollars to get somebody to scrub the frying-pan after Kunz has made a mess of mulligan. But on the square, it is a great

life—though rather warm. I'm glad you kicked me out here—

He had been a young idiot, with far more money than sense. His letter gave me great satisfaction.

I folded it again carefully, for I prized the thing, and opened my book.

II

 I HAD not read a page before I heard some one rattle the door, then knock hastily and Durenne's voice, low-pitched, agitated, called to me.

I opened the door.

With a frantic tottering movement he came in. Something had certainly bowled him over. His face was bloodless and he had a sort of fixed stare in his eyes.

"Don—my God!" he gasped, teetering a little and looking at me with a kind of wide-eyed anxiousness, as if driven to me yet half-afraid of me.

I said nothing. I am not very excitable, at least until I know what there is to be excited about.

Then, as if afraid of being overheard, he told it in a frantic whisper—

"A woman, Don—in my room—dead!"

Even then I did not say anything. He seemed as crumpled as if he had killed somebody himself. I pushed a chair toward him and motioned. He dropped into it, but with his eyes on the decanter. I brought him a drink of whisky and stood before him, waiting.

He sucked down the whisky. His hands were trembling, his whole body was trembling. He looked up at me much as he would have looked if not quite sure that I was his enemy—

"Don—terrible—will you—help—me?"

"What did you want to mix up with her for—the sort you have to kill? I knew there was something up. You don't go to bed at nine-thirty."

"Oh, my God, no! I didn't do it! I never saw her before! I opened the door—there she was—on the floor—dead!"

"Now listen, Conrad," I said a bit sternly. "There's no need for you to tell *me* that kind of a story."

"It's the truth—it's the truth—so help me, it's the truth, Don!"

"Then where is that Josephs? You always keep your door locked. He has a key."

"He went to the Stadium—to the fight,"

said Durenne, tipping the empty glass, then shaking his head as if trying to shake off a daze.

"He may have said so."

"He isn't there. No one there. Just the woman, on the floor—dead. Hat on. No purse. Nothing. I never saw her before. Well-dressed."

"All right," I told him, "begin at the beginning. Tell me all of it."

"Don, I've told you! I opened the door and there she was. I was paralyzed. I just stood there. Then I bent down and looked at her. Then I looked about. No sign of any one. I don't understand it!"

"All right. Then there's only one thing to do, and do it quickly."

I turned toward the telephone.

He jumped up and at me, would have caught hold of me, but I struck off his hands. I don't like to have any one take hold of me, any one, ever.

"No!" he cried, but still keeping his voice down as if fearful of being overheard. "No! Not the police! No! They mustn't know!"

"H'm," I said, watching him.

"You must help me, Don!"

He was very nearly begging. Conrad Hungerford Durenne, young millionaire, decent fellow, no coward; but something had knocked him all to pieces.

I am sympathetic enough toward those I like, but not very demonstrative, and not easily agitated. Also mine is a very cautious nature. I look about and take my time, never move with my eyes shut.

"Help you? What do you want? That I shall say I did it?"

"The body—I must get that out of the way. It's terrible—to do it—but, Don—I don't dare let the police know!"

"I have more reason than you for not wanting to see the police. That's why I, too, am living a quiet, leisurely life these days. You afraid the police will grab your precious valet? They will probably have the right man if they do."

He put a hand out toward me. It was pathetic, because I knew him for a fine fellow and he was broken up. His eyes had the glow in them that people's eyes have when they suffer greatly. There was a ring on his hand worth three or four thousand dollars. He had on a tie-pin worth another thousand. His cuff-links were worth two or three. His father and his grandfather had been millionaires. He had grown up

in the midst of money.* Was as used to it as a fish to water. Yet with a diamond big as a hazelnut on his finger he held out his hand to me like a beggar with an empty cup.

"Don—no! Not the police! I wasn't in South America—I was in prison. New York. Three of us broke out—shot our way out! I might get away—but if I should be arrested, on suspicion you know, they would have my finger-prints. But they would know Joe at a glance. All over the country they're looking for us. Circulars. Description. Joe's known—has a record. I can't cut and run—don't you see I can't? I'm Durenne. They didn't know that in prison. I don't know who that woman is! I swear, Don, I never saw her before! I left tonight—went to my rooms because you kept talking about prisons—convicts. Got on my nerves. And there she was!"

I watched him coldly, so coldly that he grew uneasy. I take my time about everything I do.

"I shouldn't have come," he said hopelessly, looking at me with a kind of reproach. "But I—I just did the first thing that entered my head. I should have waited for Joe. I thought—I was crazy to think—of course I can't drag you into this!"

"Nobody drags me into anything. I sometimes go when I feel like it. You never saw this woman? You don't know anything about her?"

"I swear it! I swear it upon oath and honor! I don't know any more about her than you do!"

Then I asked—

"What kind of a mess did you get into that landed you in stir?"

"The night before I was to sail—I was going on a tramp, you know. Everything on board. That night I went out just to look around. Nothing to do. Rather restless about getting off. I drifted into some sort of dump. I was sober, all right. There was a row. I don't know what over. I'll swear I don't. Women, of course. A mix-up—somebody was killed. I was a stranger. The man that did it had friends. When the police broke in somebody said I did it. There was the gun in my pocket. I felt it when put in, but didn't notice at the time—just sort of felt. I had changed clothes before starting out. Didn't have a thing on me but money. I gave a false name. They gave me twenty years! About three months ago three of us broke out."

I have heard many confessions. I don't like to listen to them. They hurt. It is something like seeing deformed people naked. What is more, I recalled the newspaper account of that prison-break. Two guards were shot, murdered. I did not like that. It was nearly incredible. Durenne had never been a wild young fool. When I read something I remember it; and now I asked—

"Why, with your money behind you, did you go over under the name of Charles H. Dunbar?"

"My wallet had my initials. I remembered that. But there wasn't another thing. Not even a tailor's name on my clothes. The tramp was going straight to Para. I was to pick up a guide there. The captain of that tramp was pretty much of a crook—made a business of running in whisky. Didn't seem to care who knew it. I guess he was glad to go off without me—steal my stuff—my outfit. Anyhow my people never learned anything. They think I have been to South America——"

"What I mean is this," I said to him: "You were rich and you were innocent. As Conrad Durenne you could have had a battery of lawyers in front of you. They might have got you off. Why were you such a fool?"

He shook his head slowly, eying me as if wondering that I did not understand:

"My family—that was the first thing I thought of. Use another name. Then the thing that really kept me from declaring who I was, was the detectives. They seemed really friendly. They said:

"'Look here, if you plead guilty you'll get off easy. Anybody can see you are not a bad sort. You haven't a record. Plead guilty and you'll get manslaughter, third degree. Be out in a year or two. You can do that on your ear. We'll put in a word for you.'

"I believed them. It may be they were honest. I don't know. I pleaded guilty. Twenty years! I heard afterward that the dead man had political friends. Got to the judge, I suppose. Got him to bear down. Anyway, after that I would have died rather than have it come out who I was. I was thrown into a cell with Josephs. If it hadn't been for him I would have died. He is more to me than any brother. He took care of me, bucked me up. He's a real man. He had a pal, a fellow named Gregory. Some

sort of little foreigner. 'In for life. 'Cleverest man in the world,' Josephs always said. Educated—he really was. Desperate, cunning fellow. He planned everything. It was just to be he and Joe in the getaway. But Josephs would not go without me. That's how I got out. And Don!" He seemed to come to himself as if suddenly awakening: "Don! There's a woman, dead, there in my room—blood on the rug! What shall I do!"

With hands pressed tightly against his face he doubled over and slumped back in the chair. There was no sound. He did not whine. He did not cry. He suffered.

For a time I said nothing. I recalled the newspaper accounts of the escape and what followed. They were sensational, not easily forgotten. Gregory, whom the newspapers had said was the cleverest and most daring of the three, was the only one caught. In a way he had not been caught, but trapped in a New York rooming-house. He refused to surrender. After much shooting—he had put up such a fight that the police thought at first the room was full of armed men—Gregory set fire to the house and shot himself. The police discovered the smoke, then heard the shot. They broke into the room, over which some inflammable stuff had been poured and were driven back by the flames. The terrible little crook had seemed determined that the police should not lay hands on even his dead body—but the police searched the ruins and carried off the bones.

"And Gregory," I said, "is dead."

"Yes. They got him. He swore they wouldn't. He swore too that he would kill me and Joe. It was Gregory who killed the guards. He planned everything. Had an auto waiting. Had money. He split with us. Joe made him. That is what they quarreled over. Josephs made him split his money three ways. I did not want to be counted in. Josephs would have it. He choked Gregory and took his gun away. I can never do enough for Joe!"

"You will be doing enough if you get him out of this mess."

"He did not do it, I tell you!"

Durenne looked up almost angrily.

"He left the room tonight before I did—and won't be back for an hour or more yet."

"A woman isn't found dead," I told him, "in a man's apartment without some reason

for her being there. And how do you know she is dead?"

"She had been hit with something. Side of the head. Blood on the rug—small silk rug, like one of these here. No life in her—pulse—heart—eyes—dead!"

Something had to be done. I did not care to mix very deeply into the matter, but Durenne was an innocent man and I liked him. Just as surely as the police were called in, he would be caught. The first thing they would do would be to get hold of Josephs, to question him. One glance at his face and they would know enough to have their finger-print expert start to work. His record would be uncovered, and in the questioning that would fall on Durenne it would be found that he had not been to South America. Then *his* finger-prints would be taken.

The only people who are really contemptuous of the police are the people who know nothing of crime except what they read at the breakfast-table. They are the ones who call the police "a fine bunch of dubs." I know a good deal about crooks, and I know that the average crook doesn't depend on that superior cunning we hear so much about to outwit the police. He depends on the crooked policemen, a few of whom are in every city, on political pulls, and chiefly on criminal lawyers. No doubt there are honest criminal lawyers; but I am of the opinion that the percentage among them is just about the same as the percentage of honest men among any other class of men who associate with, take their livelihood from, and assist crooks.

A lawyer could not do Durenne much good now. I did not very clearly see what could do him much good.

"The best thing I know of to do," I told him, "is to take Madame Guigane into our confidence."

"No!" he said, startled.

"Yes. I have known her nearly all my life. She has had more important secrets than yours. And if she is a woman she knows how to keep them."



MADAME GUIGANE was the manager of the Wellesley. It was strange that such a woman should be in full charge of such an establishment. But I knew every step of her upward rise. Hers had been a queer life; much of it spent among the shadowed places of San Francisco.

She had always been a good, or at least a successful, business woman—if one can be successful in business and never have much money. Hers had been a bitter life, too. She had learned more about human nature than it is well for any one to know. She could look at a man and nearly tell what was at the back of his head and in his pocketbook, at a woman and see what was in her heart.

It was in a way a most distressing gift, for she could have no illusions and very few friends. But she was a wonderful person to be in charge of an apartment house. Without the least apparent effort she knew everything that was going on, the affairs of every tenant and said nothing unless it became a matter of business.

Perhaps I should say, to further show her ability, that the Wellesley contrived to do away with the servant problem for such of its tenants as did not want personal servants. There was a staff of maids and valets. She picked them. There was a kitchen and caterers. Even the dishes of each apartment were sent into the basement kitchen by a system of dumb-waiters and returned, washed. The difficult establishment was run so smoothly that leases, high as they were, were at a premium.

Madame Guigane had in a way always been honest, in a way. She would no more steal a dollar than hurt a child—many orphans were being educated out of her purse, which was usually empty. But she would let nothing stand in the way of whatever she wanted. For years she had been engaged in such dark businesses of the underworld as the opium trade, gambling-houses, dance-halls, and was always flinging away money just a little bit faster than she got it.

I had very nearly always known that within this hard, cynical and outwardly heartless women there was a hunger for respectability. She was no underworld foundling, but had fallen from somewhere. Outwardly, and pretty far inwardly too, she was hard as flint.

Once, a few years before, she had got a San Francisco millionaire in a jam. He would have given her almost any amount she named, and she was not a bit backward about naming large figures. When she set about trapping a man she left him no way out. Although a very good friend of mine, she was a disreputable and dangerous wo-

man; but not disreputable in the way that most women are, and not at all dangerous to anybody who needed a dollar.

She sent for the millionaire, and he came to her very humbly, his pockets bulging with money.

She said to him:

"I don't want money. What I want is that you put me in charge of the Aradne. You own it. If I don't make a success, I'll fire myself."

The millionaire nearly collapsed. Feverishly he began pulling out money. The Aradne was a most exclusive apartment house. Madame Guigane was just about the most notorious woman in San Francisco.

She told him:

"You can't give me money. You can't give me arguments. You can't give me anything but what I ask for. And if I don't get what I want I'll give my story to the *Examiner*. I'll be the best manager you ever had. I'll keep out of sight. Do I get it?"

A year later the millionaire would not have given her up for any other manager. He hardly made a business move without her advice.

Then a group of San Francisco millionaires built the Wellesley in Los Angeles. She was put in charge.

It was, of course, because of her that I was there.

About the time the Wellesley was opened she had lunched with me at the hotel where I was stopping; and during the lunch she pulled a paper from her hand-bag and said:

"I have made out the lease—you are moving to the Wellesley—here is the place to sign—marked with an X. You can afford it, and I have to make a success of this house. Get in quiet people who can pay. I don't care if they aren't quite respectable—as in your case—but they must be *quiet* and have money. The best that can be expected of you rich people is not that they behave themselves, but that they keep out of the newspapers. Something you have never been able to do. Though I'll see to it when you are under my roof. Here is a fountain-pen, and here is the dotted line. Besides, Don, pretty soon you are going to be old enough to be an old fool—you are rich enough now for the part. This town is full of motion-picture actresses, and somebody has to keep an eye on you."

Unlike most other women that I have known, I understood her, except at times when even she was incomprehensible.

"YES," I now said to Durenne, **"the thing that must be done first is to tell Madame Guigane. She is resourceful, and would rather that a bomb went off in the lobby than that what has happened in your room should have happened."**

I took the telephone and asked for Madame Guigane.

"Hazel!"

"Yes, Don. What is it? Coming down?"

"Mr. Durenne and I are coming down."

"Now what's wrong?" she asked quickly. Hers was a steady contralto voice that could be very hard and was usually a bit cold.

"We will be there in a minute."

The Wellesley had four elevators in different parts of the building; two were operated by pilots and two were automatic. An automatic was nearest my room.

Madame Guigane opened the door for us herself and after one look at Durenne closed it rather quickly.

She was a rather tall woman and wore a brilliant blond wig with jet earrings. She spent enormous sums on clothes, but they were always of a rather subdued fashion. She had always given great attention to clothes. It was her theory that clothes were far more important to a woman than her face, told more of her character, represented her pretensions to place and taste, were her credentials—"and usually," she said, "very poor ones." She had once said to me in the old days:

"Don, when I get down to my last fifty dollars, I always spend thirty of it on a new hat. That is why I have so many hats. Hats are to the modern woman what helmets were to the old gladiators—understand?"

I did not understand and said so.

"You are one of the most stupid men I ever knew," she told me. "There isn't another man I know that pays so little attention to what a woman has on. It isn't fair. You're cheating. Why, you leave a woman absolutely helpless!"

The blond wig, the jet earrings, the purplish eyes and her very steady gaze made her rather theatrical—perhaps not quite that, but anyhow a little bizarre.

As she closed the door she said—

"Now what is wrong?"

"Mr. Durenne left my room about twenty minutes ago and found a strange woman, dead, in his apartment. The door was locked. No one was near. Josephs had gone to a prize fight. She had been hit on the head. Her hat was on. He never saw the woman before."

Madame Guigane's dark eyes grew bright. As she listened she had looked at Durenne.

He nodded slightly. He was extremely uncomfortable.

"I don't know who she is. I never saw her before," he said, but he knew that Madame Guigane did not believe him.

"Where is Josephs?" she asked coldly, then glanced sharply at me.

"He wouldn't have done it!" Durenne protested. "He wouldn't have disappeared if he had done it."

"What kind of a woman?" she asked.

Madame Guigane was not very kindly toward women. She thought them a weak, spiritless, designing lot, who used their faces instead of their heads.

"I don't know—young—she had a hat on—well-dressed—dead."

Then he looked a little imploringly toward me.

"Sit down, Mr. Durenne," she told him rather peremptorily.

She waited until he sat down; then—

"Now please tell me the truth."

"I have. Honestly I have!"

"Nonsense!" she said, and it was much as if she had used an oath. "Don, there is something more than this. What do you know about it?"

"Only what Durenne has told me."

She gave me an impatient glance, then to Durenne—

"Supposing then that you repeat to me just what you have told Don!"

Durenne hesitated. He looked up. He looked down. He wiped his forehead with his palm, started to rise, sank back, then with a gesture as if giving up, said to me—

"Tell her—whatever you—everything."

I told her, and she listened watchfully, still standing, the back of one hand against the palm of the other. She tapped knuckles and palm together nervously and watched me, moving her gaze repeatedly from my eyes to my mouth, with now and then a look toward Durenne, who sat with hand to forehead staring at the floor.

"Don," she asked when I had finished,

"how much of that did you know when he came to the Wellesley?"

"No more than you," I told her.

"You probably wouldn't have told me anyhow."

"Probably I wouldn't have," I said.

"It was because of your being here that he did come!"

"But," I said not very pleasantly, "if you did not want him in this sanctified rooming-house why——"

"I did not want him," she said abruptly. "I did not like his being here. I did not like that man Josephs. Neither of them hardly ever went out. I sensed something wrong. I always do when something is wrong. But his being a friend of yours—I never knew or heard of a man," she exclaimed in a kind of fury, "to whom trouble seems to gravitate as it does to wherever you are. I should have known better than to let you stay anywhere near me. You are always into a mess!"

"You seem to think this woman is in my apartment. Well, she isn't. I've had nothing to do with it. For once I am merely an innocent bystander."

"Innocent!" she said, as if there was something about my use of the word that made her exasperated. "I almost believe that both of you know more than you are willing to tell!"

"You don't believe anything of the kind," I told her.

"I simply can't have a murder mystery break out in the Wellesley!"

And I knew that as much as anything else, perhaps even more than the notoriety that would come to the Wellesley, was her dread of having the newspapers stir up her own past, which without being hidden was pretty well forgotten. Those who have lived in shadows have ever a dread of the light. Durenne was afraid of publicity. Madame Guigane was afraid of publicity. I, perhaps, ought to have been afraid of publicity but—well, I preferred not to have it, but though much of my record has been written in the dark places of the underworld I am not ashamed of it. Madame Guigane would feel terribly disgraced. For Durenne it would be a more terrible disgrace—perhaps the electric chair. Whatever might be done about the woman mysteriously dead in his apartment, there still remained the two guards who had been killed when he broke prison.

III

 IN THE automatic elevator we went to the third floor. My apartment was at the corner of the building, Durenne's about half-way down the hall, but past the elevator alcove. It was a wide hall. The carpet had a thick nap. Anything that contributed to noiselessness in the Wellesley was considered essential. There had been four or five persons talking idly in the lobby. We met no one in the hall.

We stopped before Durenne's door. His hand trembled as he tried to fit the key.

"Give it to me!" said Madame Guigane, impatiently grasping his hand. He let her fingers take the key.

She was nervous too, but the key slipped in, the lock turned.

She pushed the door open almost cautiously, peering through. Durenne stared over her shoulder. They moved into the room, I behind them, looking about the floor. There was nothing in sight.

Madame Guigane turned and looked at him.

"Where?" she asked.

Durenne gazed about nearly stupidly. He looked around at me.

"There!" he said, half-whispering, as if nearly speechless, pointing near Madame Guigane's feet. "Right there! She was dead!"

We looked at the spot, then at one another.

"Evidently she was not very dead," I told him as I bent down and looked over the rug. "Which way was she lying? Where was her head?"

He showed me.

"You said there was blood. There is no blood on this rug."

"Yes! I'll show you."

He stooped beside me.

"A little pool—her body was still warm. Right here—it was—I—I don't understand!"

He and Madame Guigane then looked carefully. There was no blood on that or any other rug. There was no one in the apartment. No sign that any one had been there.

"The woman herself might have come to and left," I said.

"Yes—yes," Durenne agreed, mystified. "That's what she has done."

"But she would hardly have taken the rug. And if she had taken it—it would be gone, wouldn't it?" I asked.

"What do you make of it, Don?" Madame Guigane asked, looking closely at Durenne.

"Just about the same thing you do," I told her. "Durenne's wretched nerves played him a trick."

"My —, no!" he protested, staring at the floor as if again expecting to see the woman's body.

"But," I said, "there is no one here and no evidence that any one has been here. And you know that your nerves are shot to pieces."

Madame Guigane watched him doubtfully. She was very much troubled.

"I don't know what to make of it," she said.

"I certainly don't know what to make of it," Durenne muttered, rubbing his hand back and forth across his forehead.

We heard heavy steps in the hall. Some one stopped before the door.

"That's Josephs," said Durenne.

I opened the door, and Josephs, with a kind of stupid composure, looked at us, then came in. It was hard for him to play the rôle of man-servant.

"Well, how's ever'body!" he said quickly, wanting to be agreeable, and looking from one to another of us as if expecting that we would explain to him how we happened to be standing there.

"In excellent health, thank you," I assured him. "And the fight — who won it?"

"Rotten!" he said, eying me. "The two prelims were the bunk. I didn't stick for the big doin's. It was a bum show. I blew. I jus' stopped a minute to chew the rag with Jimmie. I'd promised to tell him how the fight went. I tol' 'im rotten!"

I, in turn, eyed Mr. Josephs closely and, as Durenne started to speak, gestured him into silence. Josephs appeared natural and untroubled. He was a little more free with his slang than usual, but then he was talking of a fight that had not pleased him.

He was a big fellow, with something of a lurch in his carriage; he had a hard face but a kind of simplicity in his manner, a sort of frankness that may or may not have been frankness.

"I asked you who won the fight?"

"An' I tol' you I didn't stick it out," he answered, scowling.

"But the preliminaries. Who won those!"

"I don't know the name o' these ham-an'-egggers. 'Kid Somebody' and 'Young Somebody.' It was the bunk. What's the matter? Don't youse tink I was there?"

He was slipping pretty far into the vernacular with his "youse" and "tink."

"Don't you think I might be interested as well as Jimmie? Who is Jimmie?"

"He's the elevator kid. What youse tryin' to give me? The third degree? You act kinda hostile."

"That'll do Josephs!" said Durenne severely.

"Don't youse tink I was there? Well I was!"

One of his big hands pawed about in his side coat-pocket and come out with a seat-check which he thrust up near my face.

"I said that would do!" Durenne repeated.

Josephs grunted, and started to leave the room, but as he went he said:

"These birds try to give me the razz, I'll show 'em! I don't know what's up, but I'm there with both feet, anytime!"

I glanced down at his feet. They were very large. My glance angered him. He stopped, and turned.

"I may be only a hard-workin' man, but I ain't goin' to have no soft guys givin' me the razz! Who do you tink youse are any——"

Madame Guigane and Durenne spoke at the same time. Durenne angrily said:

"Josephs, stop that! Leave the room!"

Madame Guigane said—

"What on earth's the matter with you?"

"Lady," said Josephs with a burst of frankness, bowing respectfully to her, "I like you, but I don't like that skinny feller there. I don't like his looks. I don't like the way he looks at me. Mr. Durenne he knows it. Somet'ing about him I can't stan'. He's always buttin' in. It ain't what he says—it's how he looks!"

As he spoke of me, Josephs glared at me. Evidently a long-repressed irritation had broken out. Having been cell-mate with Durenne, Joseph, when angered, could easily forget the supposed inequality of their social standing.

"Do you know who he is?" asked Madame Guigane coldly.

"Yes, lady. I know 'im. He thinks he owns half the Stan'ard Oil Company. Somethin' about you that makes me want to eat nails!" said Josephs to me.

"Then you had better eat your nails," said Madame Guigane, "instead of talking so much."

"Lady, I don't want to get in bad wit' you, but——"

"Doesn't he know who Don is?" she asked of Durenne, and Durenne shook his head.

"He's a dick!" said Josephs, throwing out an alarmed guess, glaring.

Then Madame Guigane told him the name by which for many, many years I had been known as a gambler and gunman, and Josephs simply stared, unbelieving; then:

"Him? That guy—don't do nothin' but read? Don't drink or nothin'? Him? Is that right, Charley?"

He forgetfully appealed to Durenne, using the name by which he had known Durenne as a cellmate; and Durenne said—

"Yes."

"Why the —— didn't youse tell me!" Josephs demanded in a kind of amazed reproachfulness, almost anxiously.

"Because there are many things I would not want people telling about me. And—well, I didn't know that he wanted it known."

"Ow," said Josephs, and he stared at me queerly, very peculiarly in fact.

I didn't understand why he should look at me in just that way. It was not as if he was afraid, or anything of the kind; but he looked rather baffled, quite disturbed.

"Ow, if I'd knowed that——" he said, rather as if thinking than speaking.

Then he turned suddenly and left the room, passing on into his own quarters.

"You are very unwise to keep him anywhere near you," I told Durenne. "He loses his temper too easily. I doubt if there's money enough in the world to make him double-cross you. But he isn't a servant and can't be made to act like one. That in itself will sooner or later make trouble for you. And if I were you, I would not mention what you found, or thought you found. He was undoubtedly at the fight. The less he knows of other things, the better. He talks too much when he is angered."

After a few more words in which Durenne wondered dejectedly what could have happened to the woman he had found, then failed to find, Madame Guigane and I left his apartment.

We walked down the hall a little way, then paused to talk a moment—

"What do you make of it, Don?"

"No more than you. He believed that he saw the woman."

"And what do you believe?"

"I doubt it. I never heard of a sober man seeing things. But I can't possibly imagine any other explanation than that his nerves played him a trick. He is in bad shape. That Josephs ——"

"I knew something was wrong the instant Josephs came into the house," she said. "That is, I knew there was something wrong with Josephs. But I thought they had been in South America together. I shall most certainly see that Mr. Durenne leaves the Wellesley."

"Give him time to get away decently anyhow."

I walked with her to the elevator. She got into it and, half-smiling, said through the grilling of the door as she closed it:

"I suppose I'll be seeing things all night, too. And you, Don, don't you—you keep out of trouble."

She lifted her hand in a good-by gesture as the elevator dropped below the floor.

IV



I TURNED back and thought of again going to Durenne's rooms, but decided to let him alone. He probably wished it.

I went to my door, fitted the key, opened the door and stood still, peering down. Then I came in and closed the door quietly.

On the floor at my feet was the body of a young woman, apparently dead. There were jewels on her fingers. Her hat was on. Her clothes were not disordered.

I stooped beside her. There was blood on the rug.

I was very much surprised, but I am no dunce. She either had moved herself or had been moved from Durenne's room. Why, I did not know. But there she was, as mysteriously in my apartment as she had been in his.

I looked for signs of life, more carefully, less excitably, than Durenne had done. She was not dead.

The girl was young, dark, and, I suppose, pretty; but I knew her type. Hers was not a weak face, but the sort that in a woman can be tigerish, though is not

necessarily cruel. I neither liked nor disliked her appearance. I merely looked at her. She wore things that cost money, from black slippers to the dark-blue brocade of which her hat was made.

I examined the rug on which she was lying. I know as little of oriental rugs as any man that ever walked over one. This was of silk, about four by five feet, of bluish-gray with an intricate many-colored pattern. As far as my observation went it might have been the same rug I had stepped on twenty times a day; but I knew very well that it had been removed from Durenne's room, and my rug, which was not greatly unlike it, replaced on his floor.

I am nothing on the order of a detective. I don't even enjoy those Sherlockian stories in which the author laboriously contrives to have the detective make important deductions from trivialities. I have known many detectives, good ones. They tell me that the most important thing in any mystery is to discover the motive. I could not possibly imagine the motive that had caused this woman to be in Durenne's room, but it was quite apparent why she was in mine. The exchange of rugs made that certain.

I got water and a towel and wiped the girl's face. She had been struck on the left temple. A bluish swelling was there.

Then I lifted her and put her on a bed in one of the rooms I did not use. I placed a wet towel on the girl's forehead and then tried the other doors that opened into my apartment—and found all of them locked. Some one had a key. The girl was still unconscious, and I rather felt she needed a physician, but I did not see how one was to be brought to her without the police following. Doctors have a way of reporting to the police anything in the way of a suspicious injury which they are called upon to treat. If I had found the girl and had not known she was out of Durenne's apartment, I wouldn't have been so reluctant about having a doctor, or even the police, though every time they come anywhere near me they always regard me with great suspicion, as much as to say—

"You are a clever one, you're; but sooner or later we'll get you."

There is very little cleverness about me. I am merely very cautious and never guilty. Circumstances may trap an innocent man because in his innocence and inexperience he doesn't watch out for them;

circumstances may trip up the guilty man because guilt is a halter rope that a man drags about his neck and can never be rid of. Nobody has ever yet successfully framed me because I am suspicious and trust very few people.

I took the telephone and called Durenne's room. Durenne answered.

I said:

"Send Josephs to my room, will you? Under the circumstances, he and I ought to have a little talk. Sort of come to an understanding. Just ask him to come for something. When he comes I'll arrange for a little talk."

"I am glad, Don. I thought you might be offended. He is really a fine fellow."

"I know all about him. Send him for a book or something."

I waited at the door for some time before Josephs came. He came noiselessly, stopped, listening. Presently he tiptoed back down the hall, then returned, walking naturally. I then tiptoed back into the middle of the room and approached the door, walking naturally.

I opened the door slightly, asking—

"What is it?"

"Mr. Durenne would like that there book—the one about them Roman dames. He don't feel sleepy."

"Come in."

Reluctantly he came in. His dark alert eyes shot quickly all about the room. I saw where he looked and how he looked.

I said to him:

"Give me the key to this door. You've no business with —"

He whirled on me to seize me, choke me; but he paused with hands in the air and gradually raised them above his head. His glare was ferocious and his pitted face nearly bloodless.

I searched him. He wore two guns, both automatics; one in his hip pocket and one thrust down in front inside of his waistband. I don't suppose it is so now, but a few years ago, even, many policemen overlooked a gun when it was thrust down inside the waistband, particularly after finding a gun on the hip.

Josephs was so naturally, so instinctively, a "strong arm" that he had tried to strike me rather than shoot.

In a pocket, among his change, I found a key to my room.

"How did you get this?" I asked, but he

glowered sullenly. He could glower all he liked. "Sit down," I said, moving the muzzle of my gun an inch or two to indicate a chair.

He trembled with an angry eagerness to have me in his hands—and a little fear. His eyes kept going with swift furtiveness about the room.

"What are you looking for?" I asked.

"Say, what's your game? What youse after? I don't know nothin'."

I held up the key between finger and thumb.

"I found it," he said.

"But in a building where there are some three hundred doors, you knew unerringly which door it fitted. Quite clairvoyant, aren't you?"

He grunted, eying me sullenly.

So I told him how he came to have my key. I thought it might interest him to know that I could guess.

"A few days ago, when Durenne and I were having a bit of supper in his room, he asked you to go for a book in my room. I gave you the key. You were gone just about long enough to pour a bottle of whisky into that decanter there. Which was all right. Durenne doesn't have much amusement these days and if a little joke like that pleased him, well and good. But you are so thoroughly a crook that you couldn't overlook an opportunity like that. It was too good an opportunity to take the impression of a key into somebody else's rooms. You did. This key has been recently—very recently—made. Probably you made it yourself."

"But I ain't never used it," he said quickly. "It was jus' so Mr. Durenne could have some fun wit' youse. That's right. I'm givin' you the low-down."

I never insult a man when I have a gun in line with his head, so I did not tell him that he lied. I merely told him:

"Of course I believe you. But why are you staring about so much. Do you think that possibly the woman came to life and walked off, so that not even I knew she was here?"

For an instant he acted very much as if an electric current had been shot into his body; then, sullenly, he pretended to be mystified, and growled:

"What youse tryin' to give me? What youse ravin' about?"

"Well, in a way I am talking of a man

named Gregory, another named Dunbar, and a third whose alias is Joe Josephs!"

He was half-out of his chair in an instant. I did not move or speak, but he stopped abruptly and settled back as if falling.

"Ow—oh! Unh!" he said heavily.

"I know why you put her in my room. I don't blame you for it in the least. In your fix I would probably have done the same thing. You had a supposedly dead woman on your hands and a key to some one's room. You knew that if anything happened which caused the police to investigate you or Durenne both of you would land in the chair. But what I do want to know is, who is she?"

He was wary and suspicious, but he more than half-believed what I said; however, he was badly shaken. It seemed to hurt him to swallow. For a moment his mouth worked like the mouth of a fish out of water, then, low-voiced, huskily:

"I don't know. That's straight. But it nearly knocked me over a while ago after I'd done it, y' know—got her planted in here—to find out who youse is—to hear that moniker the landlady slipped me. I nearly wilted. Y'see, I'll give it to youse straight—" he was talking now with a feeling of a relief, as if glad to talk—"I took a chanct tonight and breezes over to the fight. I'm bugs on scraps. But I don't no more than git planted on my tail till I spots a guy right in front what knows me. If he looks around I'm a goner. I beats it, right then an' there. I comes home—comes in the side door an' up the automatic. It jus' happens nobody lamps me. I take a shot o' hootch an' feel like I'm havin' one o' them needle-baths they slips youse in a Turkish joint when yer half-soused. I'm all on edge, see? I'd jump from a shadow. Then somebody knocks. I thinks 'Holy —, now what?' But I opens the door an' it's a skirt. She breezes right in, quick like, before I can git up my mit.

"'I want t'see Mr. Durenne,' she pipes, wit' her nose in the air, givin' me the frosty.

"'He's out, an' you'd better beat it,' I tells her. Not them words, y' un'erstand, but that's what I mean. The landlady, I tells her, don't stand for no strange dames wanderin' round in the hall.

"Say, how she looks at me! A couple o' chills do a shimmy down me back for I can see she's hep. She pulls my real name, jus' to show me where to head in at—an' I hits

her. I don't think o' nothin'. I jus' swings.

"Here we've been layin' up for weeks, thinkin' we was covered—then in breezes the strange jane an' pulls me name. I jus' went nuts. Then there she was, an' me scared. I didn't know what to do. I thought she was dead. When I hit 'em like that they fall an' stay put.

"First thing I know I'm on my way down stairs to look for an auto parked along close by. I was goin' to spot one, then bring her down, t'row her in an' drive off an' let the auto stay right wherever I left it till some guy finds what's in it. I finds the sort o' bus I'm after an' jimmy the ignition. Then I think: 'What if somebody spots me carry her down! That'll be the end o' me. I can't take that chanct!'

"I beats it back up. I know Durenne's stoppin' wit' you. I gotta tell him. I knocks. Nobody's here. I opens the door. Then I gets the big idee. I goes back, grabs her up, rug an' all, and brings her in here an' spreads her out. Then I take your rug and beats it back. Then I thinks I'd better plant myself an alibi, so I slips down the stairs, out the side, comes in the front an' has a word with the elevator boy. Then I comes up an' finds ever'body lookin' wise. I don't know what's up, an' I don't ask no questions. That's the low down."

"Now you go back to your room, and stay there—night and day. Don't leave the house," I told him. "If you feel like it, get a bad cold and go to bed—but don't have a doctor. Just as soon as it can be arranged you will have to get out of the country. You might go to South America—and hunt elephants."

V



I WENT into the room where the strange girl lay on the bed. Her eyes were open and remained on me watchfully as though she were still a little dazed, not quite sure of what she saw, or where she was; but she was cautious, in a way calm.

"How do you feel?" I asked her.

She did not try to sit up. Her eyes widened a little. She was thinking of what to say. I felt somewhat relieved because I knew there was to be no hysteria—feigned or real.

"You are——"

2

Then she stopped and rearranged her question—

"Who are you?"

"I opened the door and found you on the floor. I thought you dead. Can you tell me how you came to be in my room?"

She rose quickly on an elbow, her eyes narrowed sharply and thrusting a hand at me said in a low tense voice—

"Mr. Durenne, I took a terrible chance to warn you, then that beast of a Josephs struck me and——"

I tried to show an expression of astonishment and alarm; this might not have been convincing if she had not been excited, for I am a poor actor and do not easily put on expressions of astonishment and alarm.

"Oh, yes," she went on rapidly. "I know *who* Josephs is, and I know *who* you are! You are in danger and I—I will be killed now! He was already suspicious of me. Every move I make is checked. But I had a few minutes—I got a chance to drive across town alone and I drove fast so that I could have a few minutes to warn you. Now I can't explain where I have been!"

"Who are you talking about?" I asked.

"Count Klearkoff!" she cried, as if expecting me to be shocked and amazed.

"Who?"

"Count Klearkoff!"

"Don't know him," I said, implying, too, that I had never heard of him, which could hardly be so if one reads the papers.

Klearkoff was, so it was said, a Russian exile; he had been in the Czar's household guards; he gave the reporters "inside" stories of royal affairs during the war; he had visited the motion picture studios and been photographed with some of the actresses famous enough to have their pictures used in beauty-cream advertisements; he was entertained on all sides by people of importance, though from his photographs he seemed merely a scrubby little foreigner. According to reporters who did not write even one language well, Klearkoff could write a dozen perfectly. He wore a beard. He was rich. He hated Bolsheviks.

"What," I demanded, "have I to do with this Klearkoff?"

"I don't know," she said, sitting up and swinging her feet over the side of the bed, all the while regarding me watchfully:

She was herself, I thought, some kind of

foreigner, though she spoke English without any suggestion of an accent. She spoke it rapidly, the words were unslurred and flew from her lips.

"I don't know," she repeated, "what you have to do with him. But he knows who you are, and that you are rich. He means to make you turn over to him your entire fortune!"

"Does he? Well."

"Yes. Small sums at first, then more and more and more until he has it all. He knows you dare not refuse!"

"Oh, he does?" Then I asked:

"Would you mind telling me just why you have had the consideration to endanger your life by warning me? I don't seem to remember that we have met before."

She stood up quickly and came close to me. Her eyes were bright. There was a kind of steel-spring flexibility in her body, a grace and fierceness:

"We have never met. I do not know you, but I know about you. You have money, you must be desperate; I think you are brave. I thought if I helped you, put you on guard, that you might help me. Klearkoff is your enemy. He is mine. He has me right under his heel—like that!"

She struck her heel on the floor and ground it.

"If you are in trouble, there is the police," I suggested. "Why do you not tell them of this Klearkoff?"

"Bah!" Her hands fluttered excitably. "If I tried to tell the police they would put me in a madhouse, and some morning I would be dead. My life, it is not worth that"—she snapped thumb and finger—"if he knows I have spoken. And he knows everything, that —!"

"Sit down," I said, moving a chair. "Sit down, and let us get this straightened out. Who is this Klearkoff? Is he a Russian Count?"

"Russian Count!" she cried furiously. "No! He's an anarchist! He's not even that. I'm an anarchist myself, but he, *he* is a —! That's how he got hold of me—through the Cause. But he doesn't care anything in the world about the Cause. Money, money, money—anything, any way to make money. He has no honor, no principles, nothing. I, I am Anna Arens—"

She paused, seeming to think that I knew of her.

I did not know anything about Anna Arens, anarchist. I was not very eager to be allied with anything remotely connected with anarchism.

I am not an educated man, but I have read history; and between the lines history teaches that most civilizations have perished because foreigners came into the land and ate away the heart of its people, taught them degeneracy, stirred up factions, destroyed by their teachings the old faiths which had supported and sustained the empire builders in the days of their vigor and courage.

"So you are Anna Arens?" I said.

"Yes," she answered proudly, raising her head and regarding me with an air of challenge.

"Supposing you tell me just how this Klearkoff got hold of you? You appear a competent and resourceful young woman. And if you are an anarchist, why didn't you put a bomb under him?"

She frowned a little at the last question, as if I were being flippant. I am never flippant, but of course she could hardly know that.

"I can trust you?" she asked, after a moment's thoughtful staring.

"I don't know whether you can or not. I never make promises about something of which I know nothing. I don't know why you are here or what you want."

"Don't you see," she cried impatiently, "you are an escaped convict. Two guards were killed. They will hang you! Klearkoff knows that. He has you at his mercy and he has no mercy!"

"How does he know?"

"I can't say. I don't know. But he does. Don't you see, he has you? He can crush you! One word to the police and——"

Again she snapped thumb and finger, this time quite close to my nose.

"Supposing that you go back to this Klearkoff and tell him that I don't scare very well."

She drew back in an instant's puzzlement that changed to anger:

"You think that of me? You think he sent me here to frighten you?"

"That seems to be what you are trying to do—frighten me."

"I don't understand you," she said doubtfully, glancing from my eyes to my feet and back again. "You do not appear afraid. Yet you are suspicious of me

when I have brought you warning of a terrible danger. And I have been here so long now that I will be killed when I leave."

"Why so? You do not think you were followed or you would not have dared to come. You can now go your way," I told her.

"But he will know that I stopped somewhere and be suspicious."

"Something might have gone wrong with your car. A puncture—the ignition."

"He would make me say who fixed the car, then have the mechanic questioned."

"Why is he so suspicious of you? And if suspicious, why does he let you out of his sight?"

"Because I hate him. But he does not think I would dare do anything. I am of the Inner Circle. He has secured control of our Circle, of our whole organization. He has the other members either deceived or corrupted. There is no one to whom I can protest. He is a terrible man."

"Then why," I asked, "has he trusted you at all? Why has he not got rid of you?"

"He has further use of me," she said quietly, but with such a steady odd look in her dark eyes that I was curious.

"If you expect my help, you must be frank. Tell me everything."

"You will fight him? You will not give in? Oh no, you can't! You may dare try, but you can do nothing!"

"If you think that why did you come to me, expecting that I would not only save myself, but you too? Tell me that."

"I had to warn you. In a way we *are* concerned together because—I—it isn't easy to tell you—because he means to make you marry me!"

"I see. And as my widow you would have the estate? And he expects that you would soon be a widow?"

"Yes!" she cried. "And I can't refuse. Don't you see? He has made it appear that I must do this for the Cause—to get money for the Cause. No one can refuse the orders of the Inner Circle—and Klearkoff rules it. He has become the Inner Circle."

"If he knows what he thinks he knows of me," I asked, "why does he expect to take the trouble to go through a marriage ceremony to get my estate? How would I dare refuse to hand it over to him if he demanded it?"

"*You* wouldn't, but your relatives—after your death—he means that you shall

die—after your death your relatives would be suspicious. There would be investigations, police, courts. Klearkoff does not want that. But if it all came to a widow—don't you see?"

I admitted that I did see, quite clearly. "But why," I inquired, "would Klearkoff want *you* more than any other woman he might find to be my wife?"

"Because I am as helpless to refuse what he demands as you are. If I did refuse, the Inner Circle would pass sentence of death on me. I would be refusing to do something for the good of the Cause."

"How many are there besides yourself and Klearkoff who know that I am an escaped convict?"

"I don't know. His secretary, a man named Eflow, of course. And perhaps one or two others. Not more I am sure."

"Quite enough, it seems to me," I told her. "And now what are you going to do? You can't stay here. You must go somewhere."

"There is no place I can go now. If I had been able to leave in ten minutes it would have been all right. Now they will know that I have warned you. I swore that I would."

"That was being foolish. Why give your hands away?"

"But I was angry. I was outraged. I would not do such a thing!"

"Unwise to say so, anyhow," I told her.

"I know it now. I knew it then. But I was angry."

"And you think that if you leave this house you will be suspected, searched out, punished?"

"Killed!" she said. "I know it."

"How many of them who know who I am, know me by sight?"

"I do not know. Klearkoff found out where you were by writing to your family in San Francisco. He pretended to be a lawyer with a legal matter to take up. That was when he was in New York, before he came here. He came largely because of you."

"I see. And he expects to begin on me with blackmail and end with marriage. Is that it?"

"Yes, but you can do nothing. I knew you could do nothing, but I had to come anyhow. It was all I could do!"

"That was a good deal," I assured her.

"I would have killed him, if I could.

There is no chance. He is on watch against every one. He is a ——!"

"Well, now something has to be done with you. You have no place to go where you would be safe."

"No. No place. No."

"Then you are willing to place yourself in my hands? To do as I say?"

She regarded me with suspicion and hesitated to answer.

"You came expecting me to help you," I explained. "Do you want me to try to do it?"

"What do you mean to do with me?"

"Put you with a friend of mine—where you will be safe."

With some doubtfulness she said:

"I will trust you. What do you mean to do?"

I went into the next room to the telephone. I knew that Anna Arens would listen. I called Madame Guigane.

"Now what is it, Don?"

"This is Mr. Durenne speaking."

"Don't be silly, Don."

"And there is a young woman in my room——"

"Don! Are you trying to tease me?"

"Please listen. At great risk to herself she came here to warn me and Josephs——"

"Don! Don? What are you talking of?"

"Yes, but please try to understand. Everything can be explained. Will you come up for a moment?"

"Yes, I will come up!" she said rather grimly.

I was waiting for Madame Guigane at the door and managed to whisper:

"She thinks that I am Durenne. Remember that. Josephs thought her dead and put her in my room."

Hazel Guigane had lived by her wits too long not to be able to understand pretty much of what I wanted her to understand; but she did not at all like the idea of a strange woman being in the Wellesley Apartments, and particularly in my rooms. Madame Guigane believed, or pretended to believe, that I, who cautiously avoided all women, would be easily victimized by any woman who took the trouble to make a fool of me. The logic by which she arrived at this deduction was something of this nature:

"When even lounge-lizards and rounders who know all the wiles and tricks of women are victimized, what chance has the man

who knows nothing about them? He may be suspicious, but there are women clever enough to get around his suspicions. The trouble with you, Don, is that you are too good for the average woman—and not good enough for the one that is above the average. If I ever found just the right woman, I'd have you married to her before you knew what you were about."

Now she regarded Anna Arens with a cool and tense scrutiny, and Anna Arens looked at her doubtfully; with something of an air of challenge. I have noticed that a meeting between two competent women is always much the same.

I repeated to Hazel Guigane just what Anna Arens had told me, and asked that Madame Guigane take her into her own apartment for a few days until we could get the trouble in which I was involved with Klearkoff straightened out.

Anna Arens did not want to go with her; Madame Guigane did not want her; yet they both accepted the situation. However Madame Guigane managed to whisper to me:

"You are a fool! You should let Durenne attend to his own affairs. This Arens woman—I would bet anything that she does mean to marry you!"

Which shows how unreasonable a woman can be when she judges another woman.

VI

 I IMMEDIATELY told Durenne everything and he was quite excited and very grateful toward me, though inclined to be severe toward Josephs; but I took Josephs' part because in a way he had done a rather clever thing in putting the woman in my room. True, he had done a foolish one in knocking her senseless, but most men go through life without ever doing a clever one.

"Durenne," I asked, "how many people know that you are Charles H. Dunbar, or rather that Dunbar is Durenne? How many knew it in prison?"

"I never told any one but Josephs and he told Gregory just before we broke prison. That was the only way he could get Gregory to agree to let me join in the escape."

"And Gregory agreed, probably because he thought he would have a millionaire to milk the rest of his life," I said.

"Yes. But Gregory was killed."

"But not before he had had the chance to

pass on his secret. And in some way this Klearkoff has got hold of it. Klearkoff," I said, "seems to be a Russian crook of some ability. He knows that Americans stumble all over themselves in paying homage to a foreign title. Here in Los Angeles particularly it is nothing new for an imposter to be gaily entertained for no more of a reason than his bogus title. Was Gregory, do you know, an anarchist?"

Josephs spoke up and said:

"Sure. He was a furiner. He was the head of a big mob. He planned jobs an' we done 'em. He said when us workin'-men got our rights there wouldn't be no cops. Somebody snitched an' me an' him was pinched together an' sent up for a job in which the night-watchman had been croaked. He was mixed up with furiners. He had a big mob. He always said the cops could never cinch him. But they did."

"Then," I said, "the chances are that neither Klearkoff nor any of the others know Durenne by sight—any more than Anna Arens knew him. Now, Durenne, the thing for you to do is to take my room and I will live in yours. We shall probably get a call or have a visitor soon. I'll take the rôle of Durenne, alias Dunbar. Then we shall see what happens."

Durenne made some protests but without having any real objections, except in so far as he did not want me to run any risks that he felt he ought to run for himself.

"Your job," I told him, half-jokingly, "will be to spend as much time as you can in Madame Guigane's rooms, entertaining Miss Arens. Keep her quiet and satisfied. I have never before given anybody permission to use my name, but as I am taking yours, you may have mine."

Durenne took my instructions quite literally. He was, naturally, very curious and interested in Anna Arens, and began spending much time with her. He told me that she was really a highly-educated woman.

"And quite good-looking," I added.

Josephs and I, having reached a perfect understanding between us, settled down in Durenne's apartment to await developments. The time passed rather tediously for Josephs, but I could read as well in Durenne's apartment as in my own and having finished with the "Emperors" took up Gibbon's "Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire" where one may learn very clearly

what happened to those nations that admitted foreigners by the wholesale into their midst.

On the third day I received a telephone call.

"Mr. Durenne?" inquired a smooth, cultured voice.

"Yes."

"Mr. Durenne, you do not know me. I am Mr. Bayley, the friend of a very, very good friend of yours. I should like so much to have a word or two with you."

"Who did you say was the friend of mine you knew?"

"A very very good friend indeed, Mr. Durenne. Feodor Gregory."

"Oh," I said.

"Ah!" said Mr. Bayley, with satisfaction. "May I come up?"

"Where are you now?"

"Just across the street. I am talking from the drug store. I can be over in a minute."

"All right," I said and hung up.

The burly Josephs wanted to hide behind a curtain with a gun, but I told him I thought that would be a tiresome way of eavesdropping and that there was nothing he could do from behind a curtain that I could not very well do for myself. So Josephs went into another room and put his ear to a keyhole.

I had had two or three talks with Miss Arens and knew as much as she could tell me about Klearkoff and his men. She had given me the names of four men whom she believed were in the plot with Klearkoff to plunder Durenne. Bayley was one of these. Klearkoff and a man named Eflor lived in a leased house, with many servants, out near Los Feliz Heights. She did not know, she said, where Bayley, Fritchie and Reade lived. She had herself been living under Klearkoff's roof.

So it was that not being able to go out and gather up these men as I would have liked, I was compelled to wait for them to come to me.

Mr. Bayley was the first to come.

He gave a light knock on the door. I waited until the knock was repeated a bit impatiently, then opened the door.

Mr. Bayley smiled and bowed without taking his eyes off me, or losing his smile. He had the sort of manners that are rather too good, being so highly polished and smooth that they seem a bit greasy—the sort that are very pleasing to a certain type

of woman, who thinks that any man that has them is a gentleman. His face was full, almost fat, with a kind of artificial good-nature, a very thin crust of good-nature. He was a large man, quite handsome I suppose, very much at ease with an immense self-assurance. There was no trace of accent, but any one would have known that he was not a native American.

"Come in," I told him.

"With pleasure," he said and entered, hat in hand.

He leaned elegantly on his walking-stick and glanced about appraisingly. The luxuriousness in which Durenne lived no doubt filled Mr. Bayley with pleasant anticipations of easy money.

"Sit down," I suggested.

"Ah, thanks."

He gave me a straight glance and a lingering smile as he seated himself.

"What can I do for you?" I asked.

"Ah!" He smiled agreeably. "Poor Gregory was a great friend of mine. I and two or three of his close friends were with him shortly before he died. So unfortunate, his death, wasn't it?"

"I was rather glad to hear of it," I told him.

"Ah, so?" he asked inquiringly. Then he laughed. "I see, Mr. Durenne, that you are frank. We shall get along well together. You see, I have been very unlucky of late. I am a stranger in the city. And rather badly pressed for funds. As the friend of Gregory's, I thought perhaps you could lend me a bit to tide me over."

"How much?" I asked.

"Oh, a small sum. Er—say, ten or twelve. Say twelve. Be greatly appreciated, I assure you. Pay it back in a day or two, you know."

He glanced indifferently toward the ceiling, waiting.

"I'll accommodate you to the best of my ability," I told him.

"Ah, thanks. You are a brick. By the way, has a Miss Arens communicated with you?"

"Miss Arens? Who is she?"

"Er—just a friend of mine. I have sort of lost touch with her the last few days. She hasn't called on you?"

I assured him that no woman of that name had tried to communicate with me—which, though false, was true. She had not tried to communicate with me, but with

Durenne. However, since I was engaged in a dangerous game with dangerous men, unscrupulous as dope-fiends, I did not propose to stick even technically to the truth.

"So you want twelve dollars?" I asked.

"No, no! No, no," he said hastily. "Twelve thousand!"

"I see. But I haven't that much with me."

"We can go to the bank. I have my car below."

"Um, I haven't that much in my checking-account."

"I know a broker," said Mr. Bayley, "who will be able to accommodate you in turning some securities into money." He gave me the slow, insolent, pleased smile of a poker player who holds a royal-flush—one he has stolen.

"How many of you are there who knew my dear friend Feodor Gregory?"

"Ah, three or four," he told me, "and all here in Los Angeles."

"But supposing I object to paying?"

"Object!" cried Mr. Bayley, scowling suddenly.

"Object, yes. That's the word I used. Object."

"You do not dare!" he said between his teeth, glaring hard.

"Why not?"

"You would be killed!"

"I would?" I inquired, interested. "There wouldn't be any money in my death for you fellows."

"You would be turned over to police. One word—that would be enough."

"No, it would take more than one word. I have money. I could hire lawyers."

"You have seen a lawyer?" he asked, menacingly.

"Not yet, no."

"If you go near a lawyer, you will be killed!"

"Perhaps. But I have my doubts."

"Don't have any doubts!" he said, again between his teeth. "You would be blown up!"

"Oh, I am dealing with anarchists, am I?"

That surprised him a little. He stood up, and bent toward me menacingly:

"Look here, Durenne. We stand for no foolishness. Get that through your head. We've got you, and you have to pay. You and that man Josephs are escaped convicts."

"Let me assure you, Mr. Bayley, that I am not an escaped convict!"

I said it with meaning. He thought I

was a very good actor. He did not like my attitude. I noted the peculiar way in which he held his walking-stick.

"You are a liar!" he shouted, grasping the walking-stick with both hands.

Quite calmly I answered:

"So I am in some ways. But not when I tell I am no escaped convict. My name is not Durenne. You have picked the wrong man!"

"What!"

"Yes."

"See here—" he was a bit uneasy—"who are you?"

"Well, I'll tell you something of who I am. I have a grubstake interest in a mine out in Death Valley—two hundred miles from a railroad. More than that from the nearest town. An old miner I have staked has got a rich claim out there, or thinks he has. But he can't get men to come out there and work. Not even Mexicans. He will pay four dollars a day and board. How would you like to go out there for a while and earn some honest money?"

He glared at me in puzzled rage, then slowly—

"You must be a lunatic!"

"No, not at all. You are going out there—or to —. One place is much like the other, Death Valley or —. And you are going to one of those places."

"I most certainly am not!" he cried and made a movement with his hand.

But he was very slow about it, however quick he tried to be. Before his hand had got as far as his coat-tail he was looking into a revolver, a .45 with a six-inch barrel. Ever since a little affair some time before, when a .38, which was much more convenient to carry, had failed to stop the party I had meant should be stopped, I had gone back to carrying a .45. I don't like ever to have to use more than one bullet on any one person. I really prefer not to have to use any, though some people may not believe that is true.

Mr. Bayley was terrified and angered, and had both hands in the air.

"You'll pay for this!" he cried.

"True, true," I answered soothingly. "But I always require a receipt when I pay."

"Do you realize what you are doing?" he demanded, and all of the good-nature he had so affably presented to me on entering was gone.

"Yes. I am taking a scoundrel of a black-

mailer, a foreign anarchist, who ought to be deported, out into the desert and putting him to work on the end of a pick-handle. You will not be lonesome. I expect to take your three or four friends along, too. You said you were hard up and in a strange city—and I could not think of allowing a friend of my dear friend Gregory to go without a job when he wants one."

"Ur-gr-r-r! — you!" said Mr. Bayley.

"Even if the immigration authorities deported you, you would probably be able to squirm back into this country. But you won't be able to squirm out of Death Valley—not until old Kunz brings you out. He is my friend, the miner. If you try to run away you will die of thirst. If you refuse to work you will have nothing to eat. If you try to overpower Kunz you will be shot squarely between the eyes. Joseph!"

Joseph came with a rush through the door.

"Joseph, meet Mr. Bayley. You don't by any chance happen to be old friends—No? That is good. Joseph, Mr. Bayley wants to write out a receipt for twelve thousand dollars. Bring paper and ink."

Joseph's mouth was hanging so far open that I could have thrown a biscuit down his throat without his noticing, and Mr. Bayley's mouth, too, was a-droop.

Joseph brought papers and pen.

"Just relieve Mr. Bayley of his gun," I told Joseph. "He has no business with a gun anyhow. He doesn't know how to get it out when he wants it."

Joseph, beaming, ran his big hands over Mr. Bayley and removed the gun.

Then I told Mr. Bayley to write a receipt for twelve thousand dollars and sign it.

"There is no sense in this!" cried Mr. Bayley.

I assured him that there was a lot of sense in it.

"We wanted to be friendly with you!" Mr. Bayley snarled at me.

"I pick my own friends. None of them are blackmailers—or anarchists!"

"How did you know—" he began.

"I know many things," I assured him. "I know that you, Reade, Fritchie, Eflor and the illustrious Klearkoff are going to work a gold mine out in Death Valley—or else go to your funerals in Los Angeles. As gold-diggers that ought to satisfy you."

Mr. Bayley was very nearly petrified. He gaped at me. Then, dully—

"You are a detective!"

"Am I?"

Joseph put his hand to his mouth and laughed; he too had suspected me of being a detective.

"Who *are* you?" demanded Mr. Bayley.

"Right now I am unofficially attached to the United States Immigration Bureau, and I expect to deport five crooks to a place that is quite suitable for such rats as enter America and gnaw at its heart."

"I have naturalization papers!" said Mr. Bayley.

"Which makes your case all the worse. Why didn't you live up to them? Write that receipt!"

"I refuse!"

But even as the words left his mouth he stepped hastily forward toward the pen for Joseph had drawn back a sledge-hammer of a fist.

"Write rapidly," I said.

He wrote, rapidly. Then I had him write another receipt, and yet a third, each more rapidly than the other. It was as I had suspected—he had tried to disguise his handwriting at first.

"That will do," I said, satisfied with the last.

He picked his hat and walking-stick from the floor, just as if he were about to leave.

"No no," I explained. "You are not leaving. I could not think of permitting a friend of my dear Gregory's to leave—when he is without money in a strange town. Sit down!"

Mr. Bayley sat, then rather anxiously inquired—

"What do you mean to do?"

"Do? You see this receipt? If I shoot you and hide your body I can very easily make the next of your friends who come think that I paid you the money and that you took it and disappeared. And unless you keep quiet Joseph, here, will crack you over the head—and take pleasure in doing so."

"Youse said it!" Joseph put in, glowering at Mr. Bayley.

"Joseph," I said. "Break that walking-stick across your knee."

Bayley—he had taken a good English name the better to hide his own—drew back with a gesture of menace as if to refuse to give up the walking-stick, but on second glance toward me he yielded the stick. Joseph powerfully crashed it across his knee and

exposed a long, slender, flexible blade of steel. Bayley carried not only a gun but a sword-cane.

"You'll pay for this!" he yelled at me.

"Now, Joseph, this fellow is your prisoner. Keep him quiet. I don't care how you do it, but keep him quiet. Tie him, gag him, crack his skull, if you need to. Don't let him loose a minute—or you will have the police down on you."

"Come on wit' youse," said Joseph heartily, grabbing Mr. Bayley's shoulder.

Then they went into the next room where I could hear Joseph with guttural menace warning Mr. Bayley that if he so much as *peeped* there wouldn't be enough left of Mr. Bayley to give a canary a dinner.

That evening I read a book on California by the historian Bancroft; and I came upon one passage which I paused to mark with ink:

Accursed be the day that made from the distempered slums of European cess-pools the first American citizen. (California Inter Pocula, p. 562.)

VII



I DID not tell Madame Guigane, Miss Arens, not even Durenne, what had happened. I knew that Hazel Guigane would grow very excited if she learned that I was using her precious Wellesley as a sort of jail. She would, of course, give in to me in the end, but I did not like the way she would talk when irritated. Miss Arens did not need to know. She appeared quite satisfied with her voluntary imprisonment. Madame Guigane had told me that Miss Arens was "really not a bad sort of person." Durenne spent much of his time with her. I had suggested that he do that because I thought it would ease the loneliness of both of them. I would not let Durenne enter his own apartment. He had mine. That was enough. I told him that somebody might call while he was with me and his presence would perhaps complicate matters. I did not tell him of Bayley. There was no need. One reason I have always been fairly successful in the things I undertake, is that I do not tell what I am doing to more persons than need to know.

For two days Joseph and I kept Mr. Bayley a prisoner; then Mr. Fritchie telephoned—

"Are you Mr. Durenne?"

"Yes."

"Would you mind telling me, Mr. Durenne, if a Mr. Bayley has called on you lately?"

"Yes. He came last Tuesday."

"Ah," said Mr. Fritchie. "Would you mind telling me if Mr. Bayley was successful in interesting you in the proposition that he had?"

"Yes, he did interest me. We came to an understanding."

"And the nature of that understanding, Mr. Durenne?"

"He gave me a receipt for twelve thousand dollars."

"A what!"

"A receipt."

"A receipt! Why did he give you a receipt?"

"I asked for it. He hesitated a little, then agreed. The understanding was that he was not to make further demands on me for money."

"The ——!" said Mr. Fritchie.

Then after a moment's thought—

"Would you mind, Mr. Durenne, if I came up to see you for a few minutes?"

Without appearing at all pleased I said that I supposed I would not mind.

In about an hour he came.

Mr. Fritchie was a thin, wiry, dyspeptic sort of fellow, something of the ferret type, cautious, suspicious, cruel of feature. He had a trace of accent. He, too, carried a walking-stick.

"Sit down," I invited.

He looked at me carefully and sat down slowly. He appeared just a little doubtful about me, but of course in his heart he knew that I was helpless. What could I do? Never was a victim more completely meshed. One whisper from him and the police would be on me. And, of course, he felt security in the fact that I knew that more than he were aware of my secret. I would not dare to harm him. No. Nevertheless he was suspicious.

He said:

"You understand, Mr. Durenne, that I am thoroughly familiar with the business Bayley brought to your attention? I, and others, are familiar with it."

I nodded.

"Would you tell me just what happened between you and Bayley?"

I handed him the receipt.

"I don't understand this," said Fritchie, examining it closely.

"I told you, I asked for it. He hesitated, then readily gave it to me. Isn't it all right?" I inquired.

"All right!" exclaimed Mr. Fritchie. "No! Why, he was a —— fool—unless he meant to make off with the money and didn't care what evidence he left in your hands. Mr. Durenne, Bayley has disappeared——"

"Disappeared! He has! Well!"

"If that fellow made off with the money!" cried Mr. Fritchie. "What a fool—a little twelve thousand dollars when you will pay——"

He stopped, looking severely at me.

"I never trusted Bayley," he added, staring hard at me. "Never."

"He isn't the sort of man I would trust very far either."

"He took the money and made off with it. He's double-crossed us!"

"Scoundrel!" I said.

Mr. Fritchie looked at me queerly, not quite sure of my tone, but he could read nothing in my face.

I asked:

"Then whatever I paid to him means nothing? It does me no good?"

"No," said Fritchie emphatically. "But we will find him, the traitor! But you, Mr. Durenne, you may as well pay me another twelve thousand right now. The first does not count."

"That's rather hard on me, don't you think?"

"You've got it. You've got plenty. We're letting you down easy."

I regarded him thoughtfully and he looked at me with severe steadiness, apparently thinking that his hard gaze was very intimidating. Apparently it was, for I said—

"You understand, Mr. Fritchie, that a man in my position can't very well refuse to do whatever you demand——"

Fritchie gave me a cold smile and nodded.

"You see," I went on, "I am willing to meet you and your friends more than half-way—really far more than half-way. But naturally I want to make sure that the money I am paying will do me some good. I want to do what's right, you understand, but I would like to know how many men I have to settle with. How many are there of you?"

"Five," said Mr. Fritchie, with business-like snap of lean jaw. "But only four now."

We'll attend to Bayley. He's out. He's double-crossed us."

"Four," I said. "Could I arrange to settle with a lump sum, all at once?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Fritchie, with eagerness.

He thought I was a pretty sort of fool not to realize that whatever I paid would only be a first payment, and that he and his bloodsuckers would be back at me almost as soon as they had carried off the first sum.

I, in turn, was thinking of old Kunz and that young nephew of mine who had turned into a tough desert rat and was eager to have men, any men, on the end of a pick-handle. The heat in Death Valley runs up to about one hundred and forty degrees. Kunz could blow the head off a rattlesnake at twenty paces.

"And of course, Mr. Fritchie," I continued, "I would like to have some sort of assurance that when I have paid you, and your friends, there won't be others to pay."

"We'll attend to any others that try to butt in," said Fritchie, looking savage.

"How much do you think it would take to make a settlement?"

"One hundred thousand dollars," he said firmly.

I tried to appear shocked.

"Not a cent less," he added. "You're getting off cheap."

"I suppose I'll have to pay it," I said.

"You do," he affirmed severely. "Cash."

After some hesitation I said:

"All right. I'll have the money here tomorrow. But I don't like to pay it to any one man. He may make off as Bayley seems to have done, then the others can say that they have not had their share."

"We will all be here," said Mr. Fritchie—which was just what I had been hoping he would say, but I had been afraid to suggest it for fear that he might be suspicious even though there appeared to be nothing that he had to fear. He knew that Durenne could not appeal to the police.

"We'll all be here," said Mr. Fritchie again. "And you won't have to pay anybody another — cent. We'll give you our word of honor."

I thanked him for that assurance.

"By the way," said Mr. Fritchie in an off-hand manner, "have you had any communication from a woman named Anna Arens?"

"Queer, but Bayley asked me that? Is it some kind of code, or pass word?"

"No, she's a woman. She disappeared some days ago and we haven't been able to get a trace of her."

"And will she demand money of me, too?"

"If she does," said Mr. Fritchie, frowning portentously, "we'll fix her. I was suspicious of her all along."

It seemed that Fritchie was rather suspicious of all his associates.

Then he went away.

Joseph, who had heard everything, was quite excited. He understood that I had laid a trap to get them all in a bunch and wanted to know what was up.

I asked—

"You stand the heat pretty well?"

"Sure. I'm 'spectin' to have to stand a lot of it after I croaks."

"You'll get some before you croak too. You are going out on Death Valley to act as a guard."

"I'm wit' youse!"

That afternoon I went out and bought a powerful seven-passenger car. Also I wired to a man I knew at a little town out where the desert began to make up a pack-train and be ready to act as guide to take a party of seven out to Kunz's camp.

In the evening I had a little talk with Durenne in my apartment. He lay back in one of my chairs and sipped at a highball. He had grown a little thin, but was still good-looking and had rather lost his nervousness. He did not know that as yet anything had developed.

"This is the way I look at it," he said a bit wearily. "In this life you have to take what comes to you. Do the best you can, then put up with whatever happens. I won't pay a cent to any blackmailer. I'm an innocent man. I can't prove it. But I won't pay blackmail—that would only be a long drawn-out agony. I'll put a gun to my head first."

"Well, just supposing this gang of blackmailers should drop out of sight for a time, a few months, perhaps a year—give you plenty of time to get your money together so you could take another name and go to some other country. What would you do?"

"Go to the Argentine and buy a cattle ranch," he said promptly.

"Been thinking it over, have you?" I asked.

"Yes. Miss Arens and I have talked it

over. You know, Don, she is a pretty sensible woman."

"Pretty, I admit. But sensible—no. She's an anarchist."

"No more, Don."

"No more? What do you mean? Have you converted her?"

"She has been disillusioned. She still believes in the principles of anarchy, but she has lost faith in human nature. She realizes, she says, that mankind is not yet developed to the point where it can do without laws and conduct society according to the principles of Philosophical Anarchy. You know, really, the principles of Philosophical Anarchy are mighty fine."

"So," I assured him, "are the principles of an Absolute Monarchy—in theory. But you had better forget anarchy and the fair young anarchist. In a day or two you can perhaps begin to get ready to withdraw to your Argentine cattle ranch."

VIII



THE next day shortly after two o'clock Mr. Fritchie came again and with him were two men. He introduced them as Mr. Reade and Mr. Eflor.

Reade was a little fellow with a closely-clipped head and deep eyes. He had no eyebrows and no eyelashes. His face had an unwholesome, pinkish color. I learned afterwards that Reade had, not long before, been badly burned while preparing explosives.

Eflor was a dark, lean gentleman who had little to say but watched closely. He had more courage and cleverness than the others.

They were all foreigners, all quite well-dressed, all carried walking-sticks and all regarded me with hard, watchful eyes.

"Be seated, gentlemen," I said.

They ranged themselves in chairs, Fritchie seating himself close to where I stood. Their eyes never left me for more than a second at a time, though Mr. Reade and Mr. Eflor—really quite elegant in dress and manners—were very much interested in the costly trappings of a Wellesley apartment. They would glance rapidly at some object, then back to me, at another object, then back to me. It was not, I am sure, that they were really suspicious of me, but they were suspicious men, instinctively so, and playing for big stakes.

"Well, Durenne," said Mr. Fritchie, rub-

bing his hands together and giving me a hard stare, "we are here."

"No, I don't think you are, not all of you. There were to be four."

"The other fellow he couldn't come," said Mr. Reade quickly. "He's sick. We'll do."

Mr. Fritchie turned his hard gaze for a moment on Mr. Reade as if to remind him that he, Fritchie, would do the talking; but Reade did not seem to mind.

"But you see," I said, "that leaves me still in the situation of not being able to deal with all of you at once."

"It's all right the way it is," said Mr. Fritchie. "You've got the money, have you? Here?"

"You are in a position to give me the assurance, are you, that after this payment I shall not be troubled for more?"

"What the ——" said Reade.

"We'll give you our word of honor, as gentlemen," said Fritchie, at the same time giving Mr. Reade another severe glance.

Eflor listened with head half-turned and eyes aslant.

"But isn't it fair that I should know I will not be bothered again? Supposing some one else should make demands on me?"

"Just refer 'em to us," said Fritchie.

Reade nodded rapidly, Eflor slowly.

"But I may not be able to get in touch with you," I protested.

"You'll be able to get in touch with us all right," said Fritchie. "We'll stick around where we can take care of you."

Mr. Eflor smiled slightly at that. They would, no doubt, stick around, as Fritchie expressed it, where they could take good care of me.

"I agreed to settle with four men. There are only three here," I said.

"Look here," said Reade hotly, "none of that. You come through or——"

"Or what?" I inquired.

"Or it will be very unfortunate for you," put in Mr. Eflor in a cool, smooth tone.

"In just what way?" I asked.

"The electric chair," said Mr. Eflor quite calmly.

"It is something quite new, isn't it, for anarchists to let the law take its course?"

That fairly raised them out of their chairs. They glared at me, then glanced a little breathlessly from one to another and back at me. Mr. Reade's hand crept toward his hip; Mr. Eflor held his walking-stick as a

swordsman would if about to draw; Mr. Fritchie merely bent forward and fixed me with his eyes. Somebody had evidently told him that he had fear-compelling eyes, and he was trying the deadly stare on me.

"Just what do you mean by that crack?" demanded Mr. Reade.

"I am sorry, gentlemen, that I have only the three of you to settle with. I should have preferred a fourth."

With that, from under my coat, two heavy revolvers came to view as I called—"Josephs!"

Joseph appeared.

In the flicker of a second Eflor had stripped a rapier from his walking-stick. Reade was tugging at his hip, and Fritchie seemed hesitating between drawing his sword-cane and raising his hands.

Many things happen quickly, some of them simultaneously.

"At him!" cried Eflor. "He won't dare shoot—it would bring the police!"

"Crash them!" I called to Joseph, at the same time with a side swipe I laid the six-inch barrel of a Colt's against Fritchie's head and he went down.

Joseph had fastened his huge hands on Reade just as he got his gun out. Joseph wrenched away the gun and brought his fist against Reade's head, and Reade settled down with a sagging movement like that of peaceful drunkenness.

Eflor had made as if to run Joseph through, but I called—

"Stop!" and he hesitated, watching me.

I held a gun on Eflor. He, with the pose of an expert, presented the point of his rapier to me as he backed against the wall.

"If you shoot," he cried, "it means the chair! Remember that!"

"I am not Durenne. And I will shoot. Remember that!"

"You are not Du— You are a liar!"

I most certainly did not want to shoot. The noise would be dangerous. I wanted everything to go along quietly, but I said—

"I shall shoot unless you give up that sword."

"No, you won't. You don't dare! You can't bluff me! It means the chair for you!"

"I'll give you just three seconds to drop that sword. One—two——"

Eflor's answer was unexpected and, in a way, far more expert and clever than I had thought him capable of. In fact, it nearly caught me off guard, but I am never wholly

off guard. It is the natural position for a fencer to keep one hand behind him—and I had failed to discover that in the hand behind him there was a gun. He made the mistake of thrusting it a little too far in front of him before pulling the trigger. Our two guns made a single report, though it was mine that went off first by the fraction of a second and his fell to the floor from a shattered hand.

I then shifted my aim toward his head, but Eflor had already dropped his sword and seizing the wrist of his injured hand began twisting about and cursing me.

"Take him first," I told Joseph. "And remember there isn't to be a sound from any of these fellows, no matter who comes. If he tries to make a sound, put him out—cold!"

Then I picked up the telephone and asked for Madame Guigane.

"Hazel, don't get excited when some of the people on this floor begin to report murder or suicide because——"

"Now what's the matter?" she asked anxiously, with real alarm.

"My gun went off just now. Accidents will happen, you know——"

"Don, you've simply got to get out of this house!"

"I thought I'd tell you so you wouldn't be excited."

"Oh no, I'm not excited! If you don't make trouble in one way you do in another. Now I want to know what——"

"I'll be down pretty soon and tell you about it."

Joseph was already dragging out the still unconscious Reade and I grabbed the equally unconscious Fritchie; then a knock came at the door.

Joseph was a powerful fellow. He picked Reade up like a sack of wheat, grabbed hold of Fritchie and hurried through the door to the next room while I closed it quietly behind them, then with noiseless haste picked up the hats and canes, tossed them out of sight and opened the hall door.

A young man in a dressing-gown, his eyes wide as saucers, was there.

"Excuse me, but I thought——" he began.

"You did," I said pleasantly, pushing the door wide and stepping back as if inviting him in if he cared to come. "Here it is."

I picked up the gun which I had placed on a table while telephoning.

"The thing went off—do you understand

these contraptions? This one was given to me."

I presented the big revolver, handle to him.

"It seems to have been like most of the guns that cause trouble—not loaded, you know."

I smiled reassuringly.

"I was across the hall there—asleep. I wasn't sure I heard—not quite sure—then I thought—I didn't know—I just thought I would knock."

"That was considerate," I told him. "Why, I might have shot myself with the thing. I guess a gun like this is really dangerous to have around. But I was lucky enough not to hurt myself this time. I just telephoned Madame Guigane that she should not be——"

"Here is Madame Guigane now."

At that moment Madame Guigane came around the corner and toward us.

No one who knew her less well than I would have noticed, but I could see that she was nervous, frightened, yet she spoke to the young man pleasantly, and quite as if the matter was to be made light of, mentioned that I had telephoned about my accident. I don't know whether he was relieved because there had been no tragedy, or disappointed because there was nothing to satisfy his excitement; anyhow, he withdrew after saying he was glad that nothing serious had happened, and without looking at me told her in parting that only people who were very expert with guns should handle them.

I stood in the doorway, but Madame Guigane said:

"Let me pass, Don. I want to talk with you."

"I was almost ready to come down and see you. Let us go now."

"Let me by, Don. I will talk to you now—and in there."

There was nothing I could say or do to turn her back. She knew me too well. For a time we looked steadily at each other in silence, then I stepped back.

She came in, closed the door and looked about—

"Where is he, Don?"

"Where is who?"

"The man you shot."

"Why I tried to tell you that my——"

"Yes, you *tried* to tell me, but you did not tell me. You would not actually lie to me,

Don. You merely tried to make me think that the gun had gone off accidentally. If you now tell me that your gun *did* go off accidentally I will know that it was so. But you will not tell me that."

I again looked steadily at her for a time, and she looked at me.

"Come," I said and walking across the room, I opened the door and stepped back.

Four men sat in chairs. Three of them had their hands bound behind them. One, Fritchie, was still unconscious. Eflor sat holding his shattered hand. Whatever his pain he was now quite stoical about it. Joseph stood against the wall, arms folded. In his hands he held an automatic. He looked uncertainly at Madame Guigane.

"Who are these men!" she demanded angrily, turning on me.

"They," I said, "are a part of Klearkoff's gang. I tried to get them all here today, but Klearkoff would not come."

At the mention of Klearkoff, Eflor started. Reade, who was still a little groggy, gave a jerk, and Bayley almost jumped from his chair.

"They—" I was speaking for their ears rather than her own—"know that they will be killed at the first false move. They are part of an anarchist gang that have turned blackmailers. They made the mistake of thinking that I was C. H. Durenne."

The three of them sat in stupid astonishment, hardly knowing what to think but realizing that they had been trapped.

Madame Guigane looked from one to the other, searchingly. She was silent, her face was tense and reproachful. Then she walked slowly from the room. I followed her. She pushed the door closed and sat down wearily, looking up at me. There was an air of hopeless resignation about her, a reproach in her dark eyes that made me feel uncomfortable.

"Don, you are mad—absolutely crazy," she said wearily.

"Not I. There was no other way out. This gang had never seen Durenne. Some way, probably from Gregory, who seems to have been a pretty brainy crook, they learned of Durenne and undertook to blackmail him. The only thing to do was to get hold of all the gang that has his secret and put them out of the way for a time, give Durenne a chance to scrape his dollars together and disappear. I expected to catch

Klearkoff, too. It now looks as if I will have to go after him."

"What do you mean to do with them!"

"I have a friend and a nephew, too, in Death Valley working a mine. They need laborers. I am taking this gang to them."

"Don, don't you realize that you are taking a chance that would almost ruin me if it was ever discovered—such things in the Wellesley! It would give my house a ruinous name."

"Since when did you begin to think more of the reputation of a rooming house than you do of loyalty to friends?"

"Has Durenne been such a good friend to you?"

"No. But he would be. He has real metal in him. He was caught in a jam. He was innocent. And I will go out of my way any time to smash a blackmailer, just as I would a rattlesnake. Compared to a blackmailer, a rattlesnake is a gentleman. He usually gives warning before he strikes and he doesn't go about hunting victims."

"Don't try to preach to me, Don," she said impatiently. "When are you going to take these men away? Tonight?"

"I had meant to take them tonight. But Klearkoff did not come. I have to get hold of him somehow, and Miss Arens says that he is surrounded with servants—and suspicious. I'll get him though, somehow."

"How?"

"He'll be telephoning in here to find out what has become of his men. I'll get him in here and——"

"And shoot again, I suppose. You were lucky that nearly everybody is away. The people below are in Europe. Those above are out of town over the week-end. Young Acthorne, who did hear the shot, is out all night nearly every night. Gambles. Don, you have me worried sick."

I told her that I was sorry, but that when I got into a mess I liked to clear it up.

"I know. I know," she said wearily. "And while you are doing all this for him, Mr. Durenne spends his time down there in my apartment with Miss Arens. She is in love with him and he—I don't know. It is always hard to tell about men—whom they love."

She looked at me steadily from eyes darkly inscrutable.

"I don't know much about Anna Arens," I said, "but he is going to need some woman who knows his secret, who is willing to go

with him to some far country. You can't expect the ordinary woman to be willing to do that."

"The ordinary woman does more than you think, Don. I am letting you use the Wellesley just as if it was an opium-joint down near the waterfront."

IX

 ALL that afternoon and evening I remained close to the telephone, expecting that Klearkoff, when his men failed to return with their booty taken from Durenne's pockets, would telephone. He was no doubt more wary than the others had been, but I could not understand why he had not taken charge in person and come to the Wellesley. I could not imagine anything that would make him, any more than the others, hesitate to meet Durenne. The amount of money involved, or supposed to be involved, was too great to be readily trusted in the keeping of subordinates. Clever, brainy crooks usually take care to see that when any large amount of money is paid that it is paid into their fingers.

It was certain that if Klearkoff could not be induced to come that I would have to go after him. I much preferred that he come and was quite sure that if he did telephone, I could talk to him a few minutes and draw him into the Wellesley.

By midnight Joseph had begun to be drowsy as he kept guard over the prisoners in the next room. It did not suit me that they remain unwatched for any length of time, though all of them, excepting Eflor, had their hands tied, and Eflor's legs were tied to the chair; but, unwatched, some of them might be able to get loose and make a disturbance. So I put Joseph in a chair by the telephone and let him doze, then I went into the other room and sat down.

Shortly after one o'clock the telephone rang. Joseph awakened with a start, grasped it and said—

"H'lo—'lo!"

Then as I watched from the doorway a look of amazement, with something very like fear, overspread his big broad face and he made a movement as if backing from the telephone.

"What's the matter?" I said, coming into the room.

He grasped the telephone, pressed the mouthpiece against his breast, and in a

hoarse whisper that was really more of a shout than a whisper, cried:

"My God!—Gregory!—I know that voice!"

He was badly disconcerted, but as I came up to take the telephone he said into it:

"Just a minute. Here's Mr. Durenne."

He put the telephone into my hands and as I covered the mouth-piece for a moment with my palm he said excitedly:

"That's Gregory! I'd know his voice anywhere, I would! That's Gregory I tell you!"

He jumped up and began walking about the room as if he were walking over hot iron and trying to do it noiselessly.

I made what effort I could to imitate Durenne's slow, cultured tones and said:

"This is Durenne. Some one wish to speak with me!"

At first there was no answer, and I was afraid that whoever was on the wire had overheard what Joseph said.

I called:

"Hello! Hello!" and jiggled the phone. "Hello?"

Then a thin, cold, harsh voice came into my ear:

"Mr. Durenne, never mind who this is. I have called up simply to say that you have nothing more to fear and may rest easy. My men have reported that everything is satisfactory. Even that traitor Bayley has been found and we are taking care of him. You have nothing more to fear, now or in the future."

There was a sharp click. He had hung up. I then found myself staring stupidly at the telephone as if I might by some chance get a glimpse of who had spoken. A more amazing message could not have been delivered.

I repeated it to Joseph, but Joseph was pacing back and forth, turning at every two steps—as men do when they have taken their exercise in prison cells—and he hardly listened, but kept repeating:

"That's Gregory, I tell you. I tell youse that was Gregory! I'd know his voice in —. Ow, al'us give me a shiver! That's him!"

"You go in the next room and take your exercise," I told him. "Keep your eyes on those men."

Then I sat down and put my feet on the table.

At the end of an hour, or thereabouts, I removed my feet and went in to where our

prisoners were. Fritchie was now sitting up with a swollen head. He whined to me, saying that his head hurt. Eflor, his shattered hand on his knee, glared contemptuously at him.

I deliberately looked from one to another, staring in turn at all of them, then selected Fritchie as the weakest.

"Fritchie," I said, "I am not Durenne. You know that. Now you are going to have a hard time of it before you get away from me, but I promise that you will have a much harder time if you do not answer my questions. Now tell me: Is Klearkoff Gregory?"

He stared at me stupidly, and slowly shook his head.

"Reade," I asked. "What do you say?"

"Same as him."

"Bayley: Is Klearkoff Gregory?"

"Not that I know of."

"Eflor?"

Eflor smiled grimly at me and shook his head; then suddenly, defiantly, challengingly—

"Yes, — you, he is!"

"Joseph," I said, "bring Mr. Eflor a drink of whisky. Bring in a more comfortable chair. Put a basin of warm water there for his hand."

I glanced around at the others. They sat nearly breathless, gaping at Eflor; and I realized that they had not known that Klearkoff was Gregory. Only Eflor, the brainiest and most dangerous of these men, had known that.

Eflor drank the whisky and moved into the more comfortable chair; then with something of a triumphant sneer said—

"Now you know what will happen to you —with Gregory alive!"

"Fortunately," I told him, "I am not as familiar with Gregory's criminal ability as you are. So, you see, being ignorant of my danger I am not greatly alarmed."

"You'd better be alarmed. If you know what's good for you, you'll pay two hundred thousand and turn us loose, now!"

"I am not Durenne."

"You're a — liar," he answered.

"I am not perhaps as clever as the men whom you associate with, Mr. Eflor, but when one has a solid fact to work with it is not always difficult to put a puzzle together. Correct me if I make a wrong guess in saying that some months ago Gregory was trapped in a room in New York. He had a

friend with him. Gregory knew that the police knew that he was in that room. Gregory and his companion put up a fight to keep the police from breaking in though Gregory knew that he was caught. The police killed his companion. Then Gregory chanced to discover some way that he might escape. He set fire to the room so that body of his companion would be unrecognizable, then succeeded in escaping—and the police thought that the charred corpse they discovered was that of Gregory? Am I right?"

Eflor smiled slightly, wickedly, with pleasure, and shook his head a little:

"No, not at all. You don't know Gregory—you'll find that out before he's done with you. *He planned everything!* He arranged for the police to trap him. It was in a room frequently used by men who sometimes had to disappear quickly when strangers knocked on the door. The poor fool he took with him in the room did not know the way out. Gregory had everything in the room to make a big fire. When the police came as he had arranged to have them, he shot that poor fool, set the room on fire and left. Then the house burned to the ground and the hidden passage was never suspected. That, Durenne, is the sort of man you are up against; and now what do you think about paying whatever we demand and letting us go?"

I admitted that I had greatly underestimated Gregory's ability, but I assured Mr. Eflor that I could not accept his suggestion; then said—

"So the reason that Klearkoff would not come here with you men was because he was afraid that I would recognize him?"

"A child could guess that much," said Eflor contemptuously.

"Give Mr. Eflor another drink of whisky, Joseph. I like his frankness."

Eflor took the whisky readily and gave me a look sinister with triumph. He seemed to think I was about to try to be good to him so that he would speak well of me to the terrible Gregory.

Fritchie whined for a drink, and little Reade smacked his lips.

"The truth of the matter is," I said to Eflor, "that Gregory realizes how dangerous it would be to have me recognize him as Klearkoff. One word and the police would nab him—then he would have a fling at the electric chair."

"But not alone!" said Eflor.

"Perhaps I might get off."

"Then you *are* Durenne!"

"No. I've merely fallen into the habit of talking as if I were."

"You are a — liar!"

"Joseph, have you some more whisky? Give Mr. Eflor all he wants."

Then I returned to the next room and again put my feet on the table where I sat long and quietly, trying to understand Gregory-Klearkoff's amazing message.

This is the guess I made because it was the one that seemed to me most plausible:

Klearkoff, becoming impatient, perhaps alarmed, because he had heard nothing from his men, at last decided, even at that late hour, to telephone and make inquiry.

Joseph, in his excitement, had lost his head and Klearkoff overheard what he said. Cunning as he was, Klearkoff had perhaps overlooked the fact that his voice might be recognized. Even the craftiest of crooks makes such little slips—that is why sooner or later every one of them is caught.

But having overheard Joseph, Klearkoff's first thought was—as I had said to Eflor—that Durenne could be nearly as dangerous to him as he was to Durenne. If he had had more time to reflect he would probably have felt secure in the belief that I or rather Durenne—did not know that he was living under the name of Klearkoff—and that Count Klearkoff was above the possibility of being suspected.

His first and only thought at the time was to make Durenne feel secure, to propose a sort of truce, to let him feel that everything was all right now. It was, of course, beyond his comprehensions to suspect that Durenne and Joseph had captured three such good men as Eflor, Fritchie and Reade, all armed, all suspicious.

I was not quite sure that this guess of mine was accurate, at least as far as Klearkoff's motive was concerned; but the obvious fact was that he had tried to make Durenne feel at ease. There was no question about that. Then why?

I was hardly convinced that so diabolically clever a man as Gregory would not feel secure under the carefully constructed role of Klearkoff, so I could not satisfactorily answer the riddle of his motive in trying to make Durenne feel at ease.

But the logical question that followed was—

"What will Klearkoff do next?"

"He will want to put Durenne out of the way," I told myself.

"How?" I asked

"He will not drop a word in the ear of the police; first, because that sort of vengeance would not appeal to him; next, because Durenne would most surely tell them that Gregory was not dead, therefore the search for him would be renewed.

"He will try to kill Durenne," I reasoned. "Or rather, have him killed. But Durenne is a rich man. Will Klearkoff first try to bleed him of his wealth, or desperate to get rid of him—and Joseph—will he ignore the money and try to have them promptly murdered?"

Not being a prophet I could not, of course, foretell.

I did know that Joseph and I were likely to be in a pretty tight situation if we did not keep a sharp lookout.

But I expected to keep a sharp lookout.

So, having thought the matter out, I took charge of our prisoners and sent Joseph to bed.

X



THE next morning, after an hour or so of sleep, I told Joseph the situation.

"Now remember," I said in conclusion, "that when I am away from here you are not to open the door to anybody—under any circumstances. My guess is that Klearkoff will try to have you and Durenne killed. And don't open that door to any one. I have a key."

Joseph might bungle and blunder in some things, but he did have a pretty shrewd cunning about some other things. I knew that he would obey orders.

I did not think that Klearkoff would try personally to kill Durenne and Josephs, and he had no one to depend on who knew them by sight; so, I reasoned, the assassin would have to get into Durenne's apartment.

It was still quite early, that is a little before eight, when I went down to see Madame Guigane.

She answered the door herself, and looked worried, a little haggard, but said in that careless jesting way of hers:

"Don, why do you so frequently come before I get all my make-up on? I know I look perfectly hideous before I get into my war-paint."

I assured her that such trifles as affected

the outward appearance were immaterial; but she was scornful.

"The outward appearance is the woman. It depends on what she has *in* her that makes the outward appearance. And I had a wretched night. One nightmare after another; about you, Durenne—the Wellesley burned up! Why, I got up in the middle of the night and made the rounds just to see that everything was all right. Oh, I was a cheerful companion for myself last night. What do you want anyhow at this unearthly hour?"

"To see Miss Arens."

"She isn't up yet. She and Mr. Durenne sat and talked most of the night. They are two lost souls. Desperately in love. But she will see you in a minute or two. She doesn't use make-up. Just scrubs her face in cold water with soap, the cheapest kind of soap! It isn't fair for any woman to have a complexion like that. I have to paint a picture of myself in the mirror every morning before I am presentable, and even then I look like the ——"

I assured her that she looked nothing of the sort.

"Don't try to be gallant," she told me. "You don't know how, thank heaven! There is always something wrong with the man that says charming things easily—though such men are very pleasant to have about."

Then she went to Miss Arens and in a few minutes Miss Arens came into the room. She was dark and her skin did have color, her eyes were bright. There was still a bluish mark near her forehead, but there was no doubt that she was a very good-looking young woman.

I talked with her for some time. She told me that Klearkoff lived in a large house of the "new-fashioned" old Spanish type, with a high wall about the yard. It was in a new district. There was no house on either side. She gave me a plan of the interior, but admitted that she had not been in all the rooms. She was not sure, but she believed that all of the servants were more or less affiliated with the anarchistic cause. It appeared that Anarchism had about as many degrees as some of the secret societies of more honorable purpose. She said that they might help in some of his crooked plans, but she knew that they were not of the initiated, because she, being one of the Inner Circle group would have known them.

They would not know Klearkoff's more important secrets.

It was her opinion that Klearkoff had set himself up in such great style in order to be more secure from suspicion in carrying on his work as a crook—and he pretended to be carrying on his work as a crook in order to get funds to finance the Anarchistic Cause. That was what had disgusted her so completely. He tried to make social connections with wealthy people so that he could that much more easily have their homes robbed and learn things that would lay the wealthy people open to blackmail.

"He and Eflor," she said, "have turned the Inner Circle into nothing more than a 'crook ring!'"

Later in the day I took my car and drove past Klearkoff's house, observing it closely as well as I could.

During the day I telephoned Josephs two or three times, but he reported that everything was quiet—that nothing at all had happened.

Then to make sure that Klearkoff had not taken flight and disappeared, I telephoned to him. A servant answered:

Yes, Count Klearkoff was at home; but would I please state my business?

I gave him to understand that I was a reporter and that my paper was eager to have a feature article about the count.

The servant asked that I hold the wire for a moment; then Klearkoff himself—I would, I believe, have recognized that harsh, thin, peculiarly rasping voice anywhere—answered.

I explained my business, or what I wanted him to think was my business.

He was most agreeable, but regretted that owing to the pressure of engagements he could not see me today.

He was, quite evidently, eager to have the good-will of the newspapers.

"Tomorrow?" I suggested.

Ah, he regretted so much; but tomorrow he was going out of town. Ah, he could not say for how long, perhaps for only a few days. He would let me know when he returned? I inquired. Oh, most surely, and be greatly pleased to see me.

So I gave him a fictitious name.

"Going out of town?" I asked myself. And answered: "Today or tomorrow he means to finish Durenne or Josephs; and if he goes out of town I think it will be toward the Mexican Border where he will lie low

and wait for news of how the attempt succeeds and what suspicions follow."

I saw quite clearly that I would have to get my hands on him before morning; and I thought I knew how it could be worked; and, in a way, quite simply.

It was rather late in the afternoon, about four o'clock, when I returned to the Wellesley.

Durenne was out. Miss Arens was out. They had gone for a ride. The time had come when I meant to tell Durenne what was happening because I had some use to make of him. But he was out joy-riding with the fair anarchist. I left word with Madame Guigane to be notified as soon as Durenne came in.

Then I went to the apartment and fitted my key. When I pushed the door open I was looking into Joseph's automatic.

"That's the proper precaution," I said approvingly.

"Believe me, I'm wise to Gregory. Git-tin' a key that fits this door wouldn't mean nothin' in his young life."

"How is everybody?"

"Fine as silk. I ordered a lot o' junk sent up on the dumb-waiter. Fed 'em one at a time. Eflor, he keeps sayin' we'll catch —. I tol' him I'd bean 'im if he didn't shut his trap. He done it, too."

I tossed my hat aside and sat down, preparing to do some more thinking; then there was a knock at the door. Joseph looked at me questioningly and started for the door.

"I'll answer it," I said, and gestured for him to keep out of sight.

I am a good shot with either hand. Long ago I saw to it that if my right arm should ever be put out of working order that I would not be helpless. I drew a gun and held it in my left hand, muzzle up; then I opened the door and stood so that it shielded most of my body, but in such a way that I did not appear to be hiding. But at a glance I saw that my precautions were needless. However, I never feel at all ashamed when I take precautions that prove needless. It is only because I have taken them, lots of them, that my friends have not been put to the expense of a tombstone.

A young man in the uniform of a bank messenger was standing there, and I might at first have been suspicious of even him if he had not had both hands on the small package that he held.

"Mr. Durenne?" he asked.

"Yes."

"From the Empire National Bank."

That was Durenne's bank—one of them anyhow.

I reached out to take it, but he said—

"You'll sign, please."

I nearly refused. I did not like forging a man's name, particularly in a bank matter. But I realized that it would be all right. Durenne would get his package; the bank would not be likely to pay any attention to the signature unless Durenne claimed not to have received the package. Still, I did not like it. But I signed. The messenger placed the receipt on top of the package and I wrote Durenne's name.

Then I took the package. The messenger said, "Good day, sir," and made a nearly military about-face, hurrying off.

I closed the door and tossed the package on the table.

"What is it?" asked Josephs, coming through the door from the next room where he had been peeping and listening.

"From the bank. Probably some securities or something. I don't like having to forge anybody's name."

"Ow that's nothin'," said Joseph. "Why didn't youse call me! I'd wrote it ten times an' never give it a thought!"

Joseph, like so many of the criminal class that I have known, seemed incapable of realizing that his very face gave him away as a crook to anybody with half an eye.

As I then had nothing to do but to await Durenne's return I sat down and took up a book and Joseph inspected the package as if there was something about it that fascinated him. And there was: It was addressed to Durenne, and the name Empire National Bank appeared in the upper left-hand corner. The package was sealed with important-looking wax-seals. The burglar in him was fascinated by that bank package.

An hour went by, then another hour. Durenne had not returned. It had grown dark. I began to be impatient. Another hour went by. I meant to visit Klearkoff not later than ten o'clock, earlier if possible.

As one grows older, one learns simplicity in making plans. In my younger days I would not have thought of reaching Klearkoff except by sneaking stealthily into the house; but now I meant to go right up to the front door, and to take Joseph with me—with his hands tied behind him. But in that

case I would want Durenne to remain behind and watch our prisoners. I was afraid they would wriggle out if not watched.

Nearly another hour went by and Durenne had not returned.

Madame Guigane called me on the telephone and said:

"For heaven's sake come down here and talk to me. I am so nervous I don't know what to do with myself."

I went down. Madame Guigane was propped up on a davenport. She did not rise, but moved her hand wearily toward a chair. Now she surely had all of her make-up on; so much that it might have been said that she had on also the make-up of two or three other women. Yet she was, as the saying is, "effective," and rather theatrical. But she looked tired in spite of it all. Yet her blond wig, her jet earrings, the beautiful dress, and her vividly dark and intelligent eyes made her more attractively theatrical than most of the women who take their livelihood out of the theater itself.

She was smoking a scented cigaret in a long, amber holder. Her fingers glittered with diamonds.

"Don, if I thought I had the least wee bit of influence with you, I would beg of you to get those men out of the house at once—and get away yourself."

"You have great influence with me," I told her. "And to prove it, they will be out of the house before morning. I too am going with them—clear into Death Valley."

"Don—" she spoke slowly, looking steadily at me—"you know that when I *feel* something is wrong that it is wrong. I've got so I am really superstitious about my feelings. I can always tell when something terrible is going to happen. I can *feel* it! I can't tell just what it is going to be, but I can sense it. You know that."

"Nonsense," I told her. Then asked—

"Have you lost your old courage?" She had been one of the most audacious, fearless and quick-witted of women.

"Have I? Look—" her hands moved down along her dress, inviting me to notice it—"I have simply dressed myself for the funeral procession. I want people to say at least how natural she looks! I couldn't stand to be found dead without my make-up on."

She laughed a little, but she was more than half in earnest.

"Nothing will happen to you," I told her.

"But it may happen to you. That will be almost as bad. We have been friends a long time, Don. Something terrible is going to happen. I know it. I feel it. I am just lying here, waiting for it."

"Nothing will happen to me, for I am too cautious. Nothing will happen to you—you are too lucky."

"Well," she said, blowing a cloud of smoke at me, "when I am found dead I want to have all my finery on. Nobody—*nobody*—not even you, knows how old and ugly I really am!"

At twenty minutes of nine Miss Arens and Durenne came in. He was grinning eagerly in a way that is nearly foolish, for if a man is too happy he is nearly foolish—as every one knows from those who are in love. Quite exuberantly he cried:

"Madame Guigane! Don! I'm the happiest man on earth. Anna has promised to marry me. We hurried back here to tell you!"

"Hurried, did you?" I said, glancing at my watch.

There is something about a woman's catching a man that seems to move all other women—who don't want the same man—to unexpected tenderness. Madame Guigane arose quickly, put her arms about Anna Arens and kissed her, saying—

"I've known it was coming, from the first!"

Miss Arens was rather attractively embarrassed, but not shy. She peered at me rather oddly from across Madame Guigane's shoulder.

I said to Durenne:

"Now you be careful under what name you take out the marriage license. I forged yours a while ago, but I don't want you forging mine."

"Don, I've told her everything! Next to me, she thinks you are the greatest man alive."

Such is the idiocy of love that Durenne, sitting on the very edge of the electric chair, was still madly happy. This was largely because he knew that Anna Arens knew all about him; he had no secret from her; she believed in him; in his innocence—and when a really decent man finds one woman who has great faith in him that man is very likely to love that woman.

But what I had to tell brought them down to earth with a jolt. I tried to tell just

what had happened, but he kept interrupting me with—

"Why on earth didn't you tell me before?"

When I had finished he said:

"My lord, Don, you've been doing all that when I've been trying to force myself not to think about it—just trying to forget it. I felt it would do no good to worry. I've been making myself play like it was just a bad dream. Anna and I have talked it all over though. We're going to the Argentine. Why didn't you tell me before? You been saying every day there was nothing to tell!"

"I have told you just as soon as there was any need for you to know. You could not have helped before. Now you can. I want you to take Joseph's place and watch those fellows tonight. Joseph is going with me after Klearkoff, and you ——"

"Joseph," said Durenne, "can stay where he is. I am going with you!"

"Joseph probably understands the work we have on hand a little better than you."

"I'll learn. I'm ready. Come on."

There was not much time left for an argument, and I preferred to have Joseph; so I said:

"By the way, I forged your name when a package from the bank was delivered. Looks like it might be bonds or something. You would better go up and take a peek at it."

"If they're bonds they'll keep. I'm not going up. You will try to make me stay. I see through you," said Durenne.

"I really don't like to leave Joseph with a package from the bank ——"

"I'd trust him with every dollar I own. We lived in the same cell. You know a man after you've lived in the same cell with him. I am ready for whatever you are."

XI



WE PARKED our car a block away in the shadows. I bound Durenne's hands lightly behind him. One jerk and they would be free. Then we went to the front door of Klearkoff's house.

I rang the bell. Presently the porch light above us was turned on and I saw a face peer through the glass of the door. Then the door opened doubtfully. I could see that the servant was at least cautious if not suspicious.

"What do you want?" the man said, speaking through a two-inch crack.

"I am bringing a man Count Klearkoff wants to see."

"You will have to wait until I speak with him," said the servant, and almost at the same time that he asked for our names he made as if to close the door.

But I hit the door with a push and took the fellow by surprise. He staggered back, and before he could recover or cry out, I had passed through the door and poking a gun near his stomach backed him up against a wall.

Durenne jerked his hands free as he followed me in and he softly closed the door.

The fellow was very frightened. I did not think any the less of him for that. If any one ever succeeds in poking a gun against my stomach I shall be quite submissive and anxious.

This butler, or whoever he was, could hardly speak. His mouth seemed full of dust. When I asked—

"Where is Klearkoff?"

He gestured vaguely up the stairs and made a sort of wordless sound.

"Has he gone to bed?"

The butler shook his head.

"Do you mean that he hasn't, or that you don't know?"

The fellow could hardly talk, but managed to say—

"He rang—ten minutes ago—bottle of wine."

"He is alone?" I asked.

The butler nodded.

"Did you ever gag a man?" I asked Durenne.

"No," he said.

"Then hold your gun on this fellow a minute."

Durenne drew the gun I had given him. The butler readily opened his mouth. I wadded one handkerchief into it, then folded and tied another across his mouth. From my pocket I took some pieces of strong cord that I had prepared and, making him lie down, I tied his hands and feet.

Durenne and I carried him into a side room and placed him on the floor.

"Be quiet," I told him, "and you will be all right."

Then out in the hall I again loosely fastened Durenne's hands behind him, and together, stealthily, we went up the stairs.

I moved about in the upstairs hall until I saw a thread of light under a door; then retreating, I again came toward this door,

marching Durenne ahead of me and tramping heavily.

"Stop!" I said. "One move from you, Durenne, and I'll shoot!"

Then I knocked loudly.

No answer.

I knocked again.

"Who is it!" said a harsh cold voice in which I detected a flicker of anxiousness.

"I came from Eflor, and I bring Durenne!" I answered.

"Who are you?"

"Don Everhard!"

Silence.

Then I knocked again, impatiently, demanding:

"What is the matter? Don't you want to see this man?"

Klearkoff said—

"You have the pass word?"

"If *Durenne* isn't pass word enough I'll take him off with me, and when you want him you can come to me after him. I'll not bring him to you again. What do you say?"

"You have Durenne?" Klearkoff asked, suspiciously.

"I said so. Isn't that enough?"

Silence. Klearkoff was wary and thoughtful. I cautiously tried the door. It was locked.

"All right, Durenne," I said. "We'll get out of here. You seem to be in luck after all. Eflor said——"

"Wait! Wait!" Klearkoff called. "You are the gambler Everhard?"

"I am."

"How do you happen to be here? Why did *you* come? Where is Eflor? And Fritchie? Reade?"

"Gone to Bayley! Gone the same way he did!"

At that Klearkoff seemed to break out in furious oaths. He spoke hotly in some foreign language. It certainly sounded as if he were swearing.

"How about it?" I demanded.

"I can't let you in here. I am alone," said Klearkoff.

"All right then. I have Durenne. I brought him. I thought you wanted him."

"How did you get in?" demanded Klearkoff, suspiciously.

"By poking a gun in the butler's stomach when he opened the door, then gagged and tied him. I thought the fellow might make trouble—call the police or something.

Come, Durenne. I guess luck is with you after all. Eflor said——"

"Wait! Wait!" Klearkoff fairly screamed.

"Wait? I've been waiting here for five minutes. You're not the man Eflor said you were if——"

"Where is Eflor?"

"Come on, Durenne. We'll get out of here. I thought Klearkoff might pay me a little something, but luck is with you——"

"Wait!" cried Klearkoff. Then—

"Come in!"

Something clicked at the door. Klearkoff, by some sort of mechanism, could release the door's lock from across the room, for when I threw the door open and stood in the doorway, gun in hand, he was across the room, standing behind a desk, and a double-barreled sawed-off shotgun covered the door—and me.

The situation was not pleasant. Somehow I had to plan to get across the room, close enough to get my hands on that gun's barrel; but now I deliberately ignored the leveled shotgun, just as if I had not noticed it. I pulled at Durenne and thrust him into the room, pushing as if mistreating him—flinging him well to one side. I did that so that Klearkoff could not keep us both covered at one time. And I put my gun out of sight lest Klearkoff tell me to drop it.

I thought that he might suddenly shoot, for he was a little fearful, and he was murderous; and at the least alarm he would put both of us out of the way.

"Why are you here?" he demanded of me, at the same time glowering triumphantly at Durenne.

Durenne was a better actor than I had expected. He now held his head down and seemed to be shivering with fright. In reality he was trembling with excitement.

I laughed as easily as I could and looked contemptuously toward Durenne. I had to make Klearkoff glad to have me near him, want me near him and trust me.

"Well," I said, "Eflor, Fritchie and Reade got more than they expected and they are not coming back. Eflor likes you, though I think he is afraid of you. After I had a talk with him I saw a way that I could do something for myself."

"He told you who I was!" demanded Klearkoff wrathfully.

"I wouldn't have known where to come if he hadn't, would I? I knew you wanted

this Durenne, so I brought him. Here he is. Blow his head off for all I care, though there ought to be some good money to be had out of him if he is handled right!"

Klearkoff was a small wiry man with what I knew was a thin face, though it was covered with a rather thick, though well-trimmed beard. He was bald of head, but a wig lay on the table before him as if he had removed it to be more comfortable. There were many odds and ends on the table—papers, books, odd little tools.

The room that we were in was not his bedroom, and it was not a study—more like a sort of workshop. It was scantily furnished and rather suggestive of a laboratory. There was a strong smell of acids; but I know nothing of chemistry. A sort of work-bench was against the wall.

I now know that Klearkoff was really a genius as a jeweller. It was a kind of esthetic passion with him to make wonderfully intricate designs of gold and jewels. He loved the work, was almost mad over that sort of work, as artists are often mad. He had gems and jewelry stolen and brought to him; then he refashioned them into heirlooms of the Klearkoff family, which—he said—he has succeeded in smuggling out of Russia. He sold them, or pawned them, and so got some money—but he made them largely—he loved to make them. I learned afterwards too that in his youth he had been a brilliant artist; but he had associated with nihilists, had narrowly escaped hanging in Russia, had escaped to America and entered on a career of crime.

I now told him again that he was not likely to see Eflor, Fritchie or Reade soon. I wanted him to feel that since his good men had deserted him he might have use for me.

"I'll take just as big chances as any of those fellows," I said. "And just to show you, I brought Durenne here. In a way, Eflor and I are pretty well-acquainted. He told me some things about you ——"

"You think pretty well of yourself, don't you?" said Klearkoff a little bitterly, eyeing me unpleasantly.

"I do, and with reason. If you want to know something about me, read this letter. Eflor drank a good deal of whiskey just before we parted and ——"

With my left hand I pulled a letter from my inside coat-pocket—I think it was a bill from a tailor—and stepped forward and held it toward him at arm's length.

He reached out for the letter. It dropped from my fingers as my left hand struck up the muzzle of the shotgun, seizing the barrel. He pulled the triggers. Both barrels went off, blowing a big patch of plaster out of the ceiling and the plaster showered down on us. In an instant he had let go of the shotgun and jumped back, but what deviltry he planned next was stopped, for he was looking straight into my revolver.

"The game's up, Gregory!" I told him. "We've caught all four of your men. You wouldn't come to Durenne's room, so we came after you. Shake your hands loose, Durenne. We've got to get out of here. That shotgun will bring——"

I put a hand out to take hold of Gregory's shoulder.

He half-raised his hands and cried frantically—

"No—no! I'll call it off—I'll——"

All the while his wide, frightened eyes, with the look of madness in them, darted this way and that.

"That shotgun will bring people. You come with us——"

"No, it won't! I've experimented. Nobody will come. There's nobody in the house but that servant you tied. What do you mean to do with me?"

For a moment he glared fiercely, his bearded lips were drawn back over the sharp-pointed teeth; he crouched a little. But my gun was on him. One move—he knew it would be death.

"Let me pay!" he cried. "Look here—I'll show you—jewels—jewels——"

He snatched up a package from the table. It was tied with string. He reached for scissors to cut the string. I watched closely——

There is probably no one word that will make such fools of men as "jewels." Durenne and I, both with drawn guns, stood before him, with drawn and leveled guns, gaping at his busy hands.

The scissors snipped the strings. His fingers tore at the paper, turning the package over as he unwrapped it. Then for once in my life a red flush something like panic swept me as I caught the familiar name and design of the Empire National Bank on the wrapper as he turned the package over. I shot not once, but twice, the blow of the .45 fairly hurling him back, and he dropped—dead.

The package fell from his hands to the

floor, and as it hit, every muscle in my body braced itself for a shock—but there was no explosion.

"Why—what do you mean!" cried Durenne, shocked, for what I had done had been greatly like cold murder.

"That package that came for you this afternoon—from the bank—Klearkoff sent it—it is a bomb!"

"A bomb! How do you know?"

"Because it could be nothing else! There's another one—he was opening it. This was probably the first he made, then he fixed up the other, with wax-seals instead of string, and sent it. He saw he was caught—he meant to blow up himself and us with him! We've got to get out of here!"

"I can't believe that!" said Durenne, stooping and touching the fallen package.

I jerked him back.

"Let it alone! It probably is fixed not to go off until completely unwrapped. That's the closest escape you and I will have for some time."

I examined the wrapper without disturbing the package. The address had not been put on it. It had been prepared up to the point of putting on the address, then Gregory, evidently, had thought he could do a neater job and had made the other one.

I now paused long enough to write a note:

The package on the floor is a bomb. Look out for it.

The dead man is Feodor Gregory—alias Count Klearkoff. His finger-prints will prove this.

With the point of the scissors I fixed the note into the floor beside Gregory's body.

"Come!" I said to Durenne. "We have to get out of here!"

"I wouldn't have known him in a thousand years," said Durenne, pausing for a last look at the small crumpled body, "except for that voice! I'd have known that!"

We jumped down the stairs and almost ran against two frightened men. I shot into the ceiling and they flung up their hands. They were servants who had been aroused by the shooting, in spite of what Klearkoff had said. It was only the work of a minute to slam them into a closet and turn the key.

Then we went out of a side door and along the walled yard, through a gate and made for our car. But we walked. We did not run. The shooting within the house did not appear to have disturbed the neighborhood.

The police know, and regret, that even shots fired in the open are practically always taken for tire blow-outs by people who hear them at any distance.

XII

 WE DROVE toward the Wellesley, but we could not get within blocks of it with the car. The streets were jammed with machines and people. We parked the car and pressed into the crowd. But a fire-line had been thrown about the block in which the Wellesley stood.

All sorts of wild reports were flying from everybody's lips. The Wellesley, they said, was gutted by fire. The whole inside of it had been blown out. It was nothing but a hull. Hundreds of people—wild tongues said—had been killed.

"Just as I thought!" I told Durenne. "Joseph could not keep his hands off that bank package!"

"No!" Durenne answered, almost angrily. "He wouldn't touch a penny of mine!"

"But several thousand dollars—that's no penny!"

For once I was wrong. Extras were soon on the street, being gobbled up by the crowd, and we learned that a bomb had gone off in the apartment of Conrad Hungerford Durenne, well-known young millionaire sportsman. The explosion had been terrific, wrecking the entire corner of the building. Four unidentified men had been found dead in the ruins. Mr. Durenne's valet had been *bound and gagged* and unconscious. He was not expected to live. Madame Guigane, manager of the Wellesley had given the following information to the police:

She did not know just what had happened or how it had happened, but she knew that Mr. Durenne was in love with and engaged to Anna Arens, a girl formerly associated with the Anarchistic Circle. Through love of Durenne, she had forsaken the Inner Circle, as the order of Anarchists called itself, and had hid from her former associates. Mr. Durenne had been threatened with death if he married Miss Arens, but he had refused to give her up. Madame Guigane supposed that the four dead men were anarchists who had somehow managed to get into Mr. Durenne's room to plant their bomb. She said they must have overpowered the valet and

bound him. Then, she said, the bomb must have gone off prematurely while the four men were near it.

Miss Arens confirmed everything that Madame Guigane said.

Hazel Guigane was quick-witted, and she had told a plausible story. She had had lots of experience in having to tell plausible stories to the police on the spur of the moment.

I told Durenne to make for police headquarters and confirm everything that Madame Guigane had said.

"And you don't know a thing more than that!" I warned him. "Don't try to explain anything. Tonight you have been in a motion-picture theatre. You didn't know anything about the explosion until you saw it in the extra!"

I sent him to the police alone because, if they found my tracks in the case, the police would be much more suspicious and ask lots and lots of questions.

Of course, what had happened, was this: Some one of the prisoners, Eflor most likely, had got loose and had loosened the bindings on the others. Joseph had probably dozed off. They knocked him unconscious, then bound and gagged him, leaving him in the room where they had been kept prisoners.

Then, of course, they had seen the package from the bank. The four of them had evidently hung over it greedily while some one of them unwrapped it. The four of them had been blown to pieces. So expertly had their leader made his bomb that not even they had suspected it of being a bomb.

A word about Joseph: He had been pretty badly hurt and scratched, which in a way was a lucky thing, for it hid somewhat the burglarious aspect of his features. As he explained to me afterwards:

"I knowed if them dicks got me to talking, they'd tie me up. So I'm balmy, see? Off me nut. They stow me on a bunk, an' when I spots a dick, I does a faint. After that they carry me to a horsepital, but I'm cuckoo. I raves like a nut, see! When Mr. Durenne comes to see me, I gives him the wink and don't know 'im. He's on. After I hears what the cops think, I comes to a little an' tells 'em these four guys walks in an' bean me. I don't know nothin' more—not a thing. It's easy!"

Subsequent developments confirmed the story as first told by Madame Guigane.

Klearkoff was found dead in his home. All the servants had fled. I suppose that the man we had tied worked himself loose in time to release his friends from the closet; and they, discovering what had happened, thought it best to disappear. There was quite a sensation on discovering that Klearkoff was the notorious Gregory. But everything confirmed Anna Aren's story about having left the inner circle and being in love with Durenne. The newspapers made a big fuss over them. They married and went off on a honeymoon, taking Joseph along.



THERE is a new apartment house in Los Angeles; many new apartment houses for that matter; but one is much finer than many of the other fine

ones; not so large as some, but much more elegant than the Wellesley, which, being fully covered by insurance, was repaired until it was as good as ever. But the management is not the same, and never will be, for Madame Guigane is now manager of the Durenne.

I sold a big block of oil land outright and helped to build that Durenne. Legally, I own half of it; but as long as Madame Guigane is in charge I can't have the use of so much as one room.

"Just as sure as you come any where near me, something terrible happens," she has said. "I'm proud of this Durenne. I don't want to see it blown up. You—you can sleep out in the park for all I care. This is a respectable apartment house!"

So there you are.

Pig



by Captain Dingle

Author of "The Cook of the Yalleroy," "Evil Starbuck," etc.

SOCKY was one of that ancient breed of sailors fast dying out. He had served in the navy when ships were square-rigged and had dinky little smokestacks that ran up and down like vertical telescopes and propellers that unscrewed and were hauled up into a well. But even to Socky those ships were only memories. He had sailed the seas for many years after quitting the service. He was a complete sailorman; and like most

of the complete sailormen of the olden time he had never quite grown up. At sixty-four he was as merry-hearted, as childlike, as irresponsible as at fourteen.

On a gorgeous evening midway through a Bermuda May he sat contentedly in a big coiled hawser aboard the St. George's steamer coming up North Shore to Hamilton. He had three happy companions; the quartette played cards and court to a fat, squat jug of beer. Socky won a little pot.

He hadn't won much. Next round he lost that. But his shining black face was alight with contentment.

"Glorious, glorious, a whole jug o' beer atween the four o' us.

Praise be de Lawd there ain't any mo' o' us,
Fo' one o' us kin handle it all alone!"

So he sang as they gathered in his few poor pennies. And his companions laughed.

"Sing, brudder," guffawed one of them, the big winner, who had won nearly ten shillings. "What yo' gwine tell old Betsy 'bout that pig, huh?"

Socky's happy face fell. Like a sunflower drenched with iced brine his smile wilted. That morning he had been sent out to buy a little pig. His thrifty old wife always contrived to buy a little piglet in May, and by Christmas there was a fat hog in the sty. But this time Socky had fallen into bad hands. When he had stepped out of a rowboat opposite his little home at Salt Kettle, there lay a steamboat all ready to start for St. George's; and there stood many of his chummiest cronies. They cajoled him. He resisted. They jeered him. Told him he was scared of old Betsy and her broom. He laughed good-naturedly; told them about the pig. They told him of pigs for sale down the East End, and he smiled waveringly.

"But I only got ten shillun," he faltered. "Can't buy no pig out o' whut's lef' after buyin' a ticket."

He watched sundry cases of soda pop going on board; also certain fat, squat jugs of pleasant suggestion.

"Come on. You kin win enuf fo' six pigs playin' cahds," they said.

And Socky, being the worst player in the world, plunged headlong at the flattery.

Now he was nearing home. He had been so happy too. At St. George's there had been no pigs; at least, none to be bought at the price he could pay then. And here they had to remind him that he must face old Betsy. Mercurially he recovered his spirits. No use making trouble beforehand. He helped to finish the fat, squat jug and stole a bottle of flat ginger ale to take home as a peace offering.

The worst his friends had hinted at happened. Betsy had a soul above soda pop. Her eyes glittered when he presented himself, pigless, smiling, holding out his bottle of pop.

"Whar's dat pig?" she demanded.

Socky grinned, held the pop bottle nearer. She stood in the doorway, with her hand on the broom. Thunder squalls in the horizon, thought Socky.

"Dahling, that pig bust loose on the boat. Run lak the mischief. I go after——"

Betsy's eyes flashed fire. She picked up the broom.

"I chase that critter," stammered Socky, shifting uneasily from foot to foot, eying the broom. "That pig go clar through the hawsepipe into the sea, an' a shark et him," he finished with a rush.

Next instant he was running down to the harbor, arms wrapped about his head, which rang to the lusty cracks of Betsy's broom-handle. When shortness of breath stopped the dear old lady in her tracks, Socky held right on his course, and her shrill voice followed him.

"Befo' yo' crosses this do' mat, yo' fotch home ten shillun or dat pig, yo' wuthless nigger! An' d'rent due tomorrer an' all! Yo' no 'count——"

The pop bottle splintered on the rocks beside him. Socky never stopped until he sat safely in a rowboat, cast loose from shore, afloat on the poppling, moonlit waters of the harbor.

Bright lights shone upon diners and dancers on Isle of White; boatmen's lanterns sped over the calm water like fireflies. Socky soon recovered from his flutter and chuckled to himself as he reviewed events. He and Betsy had lived a very happy wedded life. He knew the dear old lady had only their home welfare at heart. He owed her much. And now he had squandered her patiently hoarded ten shillings and lied to her about a miserable pig.

He dipped the oars. Rowboats were making shillings fast, ferrying folks from town to island and back. He would show Betsy that he could make good as well as make trouble. He bent over his oars, chuckling. All his good humor returned. He sang:

"Glorious, glorious, a full jug o' beer atween the four o' us.

Hoarse shouts broke into his song. He heard a roar of water, a crackling of steam as a whistle-cord was pulled. Then his boat was rolled over and over by the oncoming stem of a steamboat, and he was hauled out of the water by reaching hands.

"Whut's a matter wid you anyway, Socky

Adams?" they railed at him while the steamer gathered speed again. "Ain't yo' ben 'roun' de watter long enuf to take keer o' yo'se'f?"

Socky stood gazing in awe at the scattered boards of the boat. It was not his boat. He had borrowed it. He would have to earn a lot more than ten shillings now.

"How fur yo' goin'?" he asked, shivering.

"Out to Grassy Bay, wid stores fo' a steamer whut goin' to sea."

Socky sought the man in charge of the stores, asking for a job helping to ship them.

"All right. Five shillings for the job," the man said.

"I got to have ten shillun. Mus' have ten shillun at least," said Socky.

But there were no ten-shilling jobs. The stores boat arrived alongside a tall steamship, whose decks were brightly lighted, whose steampipe forward of the funnel was showing the white feather. The stores man clambered aboard and presently returned to supervise the slinging. He saw Socky.

"Here, you. Hop aboard there and get down into the freezer. You don't mind cold. Unslung the stuff, and keep a check on it. Go on. Hurry up. The ship's bound to sea."

"Ten shillun?" bargained Socky. "It's wuth a pound."

"Yes, yes. Ten shillings for the job. Hurry up."

 SOCKY froze in the chamber. Then sweated. The job was done, and his ten shillings were assured. What did he care for the bitter cold that turned the sweat chilly upon him. He wiped his face and climbed up the iron ladder. At the mid-grating the butcher stood, a man of his own color and kind.

"Here, brudder, take a pull on this," he told Socky, and proffered a bottle of ruby rum that tasted like music blown in glass.

It warmed his old bones. It made his heart sing. To go home full of such pleasant warmth, and with ten shillings in pocket to boot; of course, there was the boat——

"Pull again, brudder," said the butcher.

Socky pulled, bade his friend a kindly farewell and sprang up the rest of the ladder like a youngster. At the rail he stared, then raised his husty old pipes in earnest:

"Hey, ahoy! Yo' lef' me bahind! Ahoy, aho-oy!"

But the stores boat was already a speck, speeding back to the city. Socky had been an extra hand, an unexpected one; in the hurry of getting clear they had forgotten him. And the steamer Socky stood on was passing seaward.

Socky found his butcher friend again and told him the bad news.

"Take a pull on this, brudder. Ah'll see whut Ah kin do," said the friendly butcher.

Socky felt less apprehensive about his return home by the time the butcher returned. The rum was good. It went to his heart.

"Steward sez yo' all kin wuk yo' passage 'longa me," the butcher said, salvaging the remains of the rum.

"I got to have ten shillun," stipulated Socky.

"Yo' all'll git yo' vittles and bed. Tha's all Ah know. Ef yo wants wages, yo' all better see de captin," the butcher said.

Socky saw the captain in the morning. If there was any vacancy coming back, he would be put on wages. For the present he was only a stowaway. He could work for his food and passage; work in any department he liked. That was a concession. But then every sea captain who visited Bermuda knew of old Socky, knew of his sterling worth, knew he could kill a sheep or cook it, make a rope or use it, row a boat or steer a ship.

"I got to earn ten shillun, sir," quoth Socky.

"Coming back, perhaps," the captain told him.

Socky forgot his troubles. By the middle of the first day out he had elected himself quartermaster with a roving commission. He took on the job of overhauling the gear of the davit boats, and none bothered him, for what his fingers touched became better for the touching. His happy old face shone again. Shrewdly, he was at pains to keep in with the butcher and to make friends with the pantryman. A wee nip of rum and a bit of cabin food were the reward. He had just been filled. Everything was rosy. With the beautiful irresponsibility that characterized him he had forgotten all about Betsy, the pig, the boat, the ten shillings, everything except the present.

"Whar wuz yo' baby bo'n, dahling?
Whar wuz yo' baby bo'n, dahling?
Whar wuz yo' baby bo'n, dahling?
Under de coconut tree."

He sang the old Demerara plantation love song in a clear tenor; and back from the third-class passenger-deck came the refrain, surprisingly:

"Oh, no, not mine, dahlings.
Oh, no, not mine, dahlings.
Oh, no, not mine, dahlings.
Under de coconut tree."

Socky's song was curtailed. That song and its refrain had been a link between him and Betsy for long years. He would sing it while far out on the harbor, hauling fish-pots; and always Betsy would give him back the refrain. Now an unseen passenger had taken up Betsy's part; in a fine voice, too, with a ring of youth in it; but it only served to remind old Socky of Betsy. Perhaps the singer had hoped it might serve a more intimate purpose. Such a hope was still-born, if conceived.

But a lightsome heart refused to stay desolate. Next day Socky was singing as blithely as ever. The chief mate of the steamer glanced once at the work he was doing and thereafter left the happy negro to himself. That work ought to have been done long ago. It was sailorman's work, too; and sailormen were scarcer every voyage. He would tell the captain about Socky. They would make a job for him next time in port. A quartermaster bore Socky news of hearing the chief officer plead his case; told him they would sign him on, with wages. For the rest of the day Socky's fingers refused to stay on the job; they snapped briskly like castanets, keeping time to his singing.

"Betsy, I shorely goin' to bring yo' pig home this time!" he howled skyward as he put away his work and went to see the butcher.



ONE orange-tinted dawn a ship was sighted in the steamer's course.

First glimpse revealed it as a lofty brig; nearer approach and binoculars unfolded the first pages of an ocean story. Apart from the rarity of the rig itself in the deep waters, the brig in sight forced investigation by its condition. The royals were hanging in the buntlines, the yards lowered. Both courses were hauled up; the foreyards were braced aback; a jib-sheet had been let go and left loose, the sail fluttering as the brig swept to and fell off.

"Abandoned?" muttered the captain.

"Don't see any boats, sir," said the chief officer.

"Seems in good shape, though. Good mind to look her over, mister."

"Think there's pestilence, sir?"

The mate was cautious.

"Easy to find out. Lower away a boat and man it. That brig looks to me like a salvage plum. Send the third officer over."

Sleepy-eyed passengers shivered in the cool dawn, unwilling to miss any promised excitement. The boat was lowered, and Socky was first man in it. Dimly, far back in his memory, he had recorded tales of salvage at sea. Salvage was, to him, an unknown luxury, like finding ambergris. But as he recalled those tales, it was something earnestly to be hoped for. Even foremast hands shared in the recovered treasure when a ship and cargo were found at sea and carried to a safe haven.

Socky was too simple of soul to know or care that a stowaway did not rate as one of a crew when salvage came to be discussed. Nobody reminded him of that. But he was there to show all hands he was on deck when work was afoot; and in his heart he nursed the hope that some crumbs of the salvage might fall to him.

He rowed bow-oar, was first to hook on to the brig, was first on board with the boat-painter in his hand. And as he leaped from the bulwarks to the deck he yelled:

"Glory! Mus' be a Po'tigee cattle-boat, sir! Hyah!" In a moment he leaped back to the rail, wide-eyed. "A deck-load o' pigs, sir, an' all crazy!"

The third officer climbed up beside him and looked down upon a swarming, grunting, jostling horde of poor-looking hogs. The decks were filthy. Over against a heap of brine-soaked staves and brass hoops that had once been a harness-cask for soaking out salt meat, most of the staves bearing marks of sharp teeth, a suggestive smear of greasy red hinted at hungry hogs turned cannibal.

"A — of a note!" muttered the officer, scanning the brig's condition above decks. "Here, follow me along the rail. Let's look her over aft. Pigs can't climb ladders, can they?"

"Doggawn ef I know, sir," retorted Socky, gingerly balancing himself on the board rail and following the officer aft to

the low half-poop. "These here pigs is like to do most anything, I 'magine. Soon es I lit on deck, one of 'em sez to the others, 'Bite him! Chaw him up!' an', by mischief, they come fer me like a mess o' sharks. I bet they hawgs could climb ropes, sir."

There was no apparent reason for the abandonment of the brig. All papers were gone; there were no chronometers, nor other instruments except a pair of plain rulers and some rusty dividers in what had been the mate's cabin. The brig was well preserved; she had not been abandoned more than, at most, a week or ten days, judging from the condition of some coffee-grounds in a pot in the pantry. The hatches were fastened. The pump-brakes were unshipped. The condition of the sails indicated that the abandonment had been methodically carried out.

"Go forward along the rail and dangle your legs," the officer told Socky. "Go, you idiot! Don't let 'em grab you. I want 'em out of the way while I peep into the hold."

With Socky as bait, the pigs rushed forward grunting and fighting, tusks clashing savagely. They were ravenous for food; that was evident. The officer leaped to the deck, keeping a wary eye on Socky, and soon opened a corner of the main hatch. The examination was brief. The cargo easily identified. By arm semaphore the officer signaled to the steamer that the Cape Verde brig *Julia*, with wine in casks and a deck-load of hogs, appeared to be in good condition, and that no apparent reason for abandonment could be discovered on cursory examination. The answer came back. A crew would attempt to carry the brig to port. The boat was to return for the salvage officer and crew.

"I'll stan' by here 'till the boat comes back," offered Socky eagerly. He was afraid he might be taken out of the crew if he went to the ship. "I got no clothes to get anyhow, sir," he grinned.

He need have had no fear.

"Let him go along with you," the captain told the officer. "He's a good sailor-man. Used to square-riggers. He'll be as good as a mate. And won't cut in on the salvage, either, not being a member of the signed on crew. Won't be left out, of course. Give him something. But nothing like a full share. Lucky to get anything."



THE steamer plowed on her course. The brig swung her foreyards, the five men and the officer hauling braces from rails and fiferails and dodging the clashing tusks of the famished hogs. Then the problem was to clear the decks of the brutes, so that men could work ship safely, and to find food for man and beast. Under the cabin in a tiny lazarette potatoes and onions made their presence known.

"Feed 'em spuds," said the officer. "Pigs like spuds."

Socky hoisted up potatoes and carried them. None of the other men would go near the squealing pigs.

"Let the nigger do it," they said. "He ain't got no right here anyhow."

Socky filled a mess-kid with raw tubers and watched his chance to run down the short poop ladder and dump it on deck. He skipped back up the steps with eyes wide and feet stepping high; and the officer stood beside him while both stared in astonishment at the scene that ensued. The three other seamen who were not at the helm approached with doubtful faces. A black mass of pigs charged the potatoes, overturning the kid and scattering the contents. Two razor-backed boars started fighting as a result of the collision. In thirty seconds the whole pack were rending and tearing at each other. One pig fell, and his brothers made a messy meal of him. The rest grunted about the decks, rooting, snuffling wherever a red speck lay.

"Good ——!" gasped the officer.

"Good ——!" echoed a seaman.

And all turned a wistful eye toward the feather of smoke under which the vanished steamer sped from them.

By noon Socky had solved part of the problem. While the officer was busy in the captain's cabin with chart and rulers, Socky opened the lazarette hatch and hauled up a sack of potatoes, dumping them loose on the cabin floor. Then he peeped through the main-deck ports, saw that the pigs were forward and flung open the forward door, making a hurried exit to the poop himself by way of the companionway. Presently an inquisitive hog poked his snout inside the cabin, sniffed at the rich aroma of over-ripe potatoes, and entered grunting. Soon the last hog was inside. The sacred precincts of the *Julia's* cabin was thunderous with porcine gruntings. Softly Socky

nipped down the poop ladder and slammed shut the forward door.

"Hyah! Thar's pigs in clover fo' you!" he howled, snapping his fingers and capering high. "Bet yo' never wuz shipmates wi' pigs in the cabin befo', brudders!"

The man at the wheel grinned. He and his mates had been scowling at Socky. Now they all appeared to appreciate what he had accomplished. It warmed the old fellow's heart to see them smile.

"'S all right," said one helmsman. "How's Mister Jones goin' to get out?"

Mr. Jones got out of the captain's cabin by way of the skylight that time. But it was beneath his dignity to repeat such gymnastics. As soon as he had set a course for Bermuda and trimmed the brig's sails to the fair quartering wind, he cast about for some more suitable pen for the pigs. Socky had roamed all over the brig since clearing the decks. He had started a fire in the galley stove.

"Where is he now?" the officer wanted to know.

"Gone for'ard, sir," said the helmsman. "I see him lift the cover of the longboat 'midships there. He took something out, then went to the foc'sle with it."

At the door of the black cavern under the topgallant forecastle the officer was almost capsized by a lean, agile pig darting between his legs, squealing lustily. Grabbing for a flying hind leg, Socky plunged by.

"Hyah! Come on heah, yo' critter!"

Then, seeing the officer, he grinned, but held on to the pig.

"I foun' this one in the longboat, sir. 'Most stahved, he wuz. Well brung up pig, he is. Tuhn up his nose at the foc'sle, he do."

"Phew! Don't blame him!" gasped Mister Jones, sticking in his nose and promptly sticking it out again.

"I jes' takin' a look to see ef 't wuz fit fo' us men to sleep in, sir."

"It isn't. It'll have to do for the pigs, though. We must get 'em out of the cabin, anyhow."

"That ain't easy," said Socky.

He picked up his pig, stuck it under his arm, and carried it again to the longboat.

"Yo' stay there, Brudder Snowflake, an' don' yo' git squealin' fo' them other hawgs. They ain't yo' class."



BY THE appearance of the longboat, that piece of the brig's furniture had long been neglected as a boat. It was painted fast to the chocks, and the seams were open. Inside were all the signs to indicate that it had been long used as a pig pen, perhaps for the isolation of particular pigs doomed to fattening and death.

Socky tossed some potatoes in to his pig and put his wits to work on the problem of moving a hundred savage hogs out of cabin accommodations into a sailor's fore-castle. It was a problem indeed. No self-respecting hog would agree to such a shift. He was glad his own pig had refused to live there. Snowflake was destined for better things, under the maternal eye of Betsy.

Afternoon was far advanced before the solution was found. The brig sailed fast through smooth seas which the kindly breeze only tempted into white and azure frolic. Mr. Jones wondered again and again why the crew had abandoned her. He was ready to dance and sing. Much money, perhaps promotion too, would accrue when he anchored the *Julia* in a safe harbor. The seamen, too, were happy. Socky was cooking for them; Socky was contriving a decoy to get the pigs forward; Socky was doing all the hard, unpleasant work; and Socky could claim no share to curtail their salvage.

"I got a scheme, sir," reported Socky about eight bells. "I put a tub o' taters jes' outside the cabin door, with a long line to it. I stan' for'ard with the line, an' when one o' the sailors opens the door quick, I haul on the line an' the pigs will sure foller that tub o' taters clar into the foc'sle. Then somebody run up an' shut the door o' the foc'sle, while I git out through the skylight lik yo' did out of the captain's cabin."

The pigs squealed and fought under foot in the cabin.

"Who's goin' t' open the door?" a seaman wanted to know.

"I'll do it myself," said Mr. Jones. "Go ahead, Socky."

Socky took his rope and stood beside the foremast. After a precautionary peep through the main-deck ports, which showed him little looking in from outside, the officer flung the door open and jumped for the ladder. It was some moments before the first pigs appeared, but when they saw the tub of potatoes they rushed for it, and the rest followed, with such a squealing, a

grunting, a red-eyed fury and clashing of teeth that even Mr. Jones shuddered.

"They're as bad as wolves!" he gasped.

They were. The fiercest of the boars had foam flecks about their jaws. They were lean and swift of foot. All bore hideous scars on shoulder, side, or flank—scars of combat.

"Mad, too!" growled a seaman. "Look at that son of a gun!"

The son of a gun was a bristling, foaming boar with tusks as long as a man's fingers. The beast leaped ahead of the pack like a deer, overturned Socky's tub, and in an instant the scheme had gone aglee. The pigs fought over the scattered tubers amidships. The empty tub no longer attracted them. And Socky was marooned forward, while the cabin main-deck doors were still open with the deck alive with fighting hogs. Those pigs must have been half-wild at the beginning of the voyage; a week or more of starvation had driven them crazy.

"That door must be closed, or they'll get into the cabin again," said the officer. He waited for no volunteer, but went down the ladder himself.

"Look out, sir!" yelled Socky as Mr. Jones reached the door.

The officer, confused, uncertain where to look, was only aware of a rushing black shape behind him. For an instant he was uncertain whether to go inside or jump for the poop ladder; and in that instant a slaving boar caught him and ripped his thigh with an upward slash of tusks already red.

By eight bells in the first watch Mr. Jones's thigh was swollen and looked bad. Socky stood at the wheel after feeding his shipmates, who hovered around the officer as he sat on the skylight trying to dress the wound with the poor materials at hand. The pigs lay about the dark decks, snoring, grunting, snuffing in uncertain sleep.

"Looks bad, that do," remarked one seaman.

"P'isoned, likely," said another.

"Shut up!" snapped Mr. Jones irritably.

"Get me more clean salt water."

A jib-sheet parted in the darkness forward. The sail flogged.

"Go and secure it," said Mr. Jones.

"Not me! Not me!" was the answer to that. The sail was permitted to thrash itself to tatters.

The men did not sleep. When time came

to relieve the wheel, nobody offered. The brig ran on through the night without side lights. Socky stood his long trick, never aware of the passage of time. His thoughts were far away. He could see old Betsy with her broom; but the broom was flung aside as he stepped ashore bearing a fine big pig. He did not let his mind dwell upon salvage. That was to be the grand surprize, after Betsy had put the pig into a sty. He was happy.

"Whar wuz yo' baby bo'n, dahling?
Whar wuz yo' baby bo'n, dahling?
Whar wuz yo' baby bo'n, dahling?
Under de coconut tree."

He hummed the old song softly. Almost he could hear Betsy's mellow voice take up the refrain.

"Stow yer silly clack!" growled the seaman who should have relieved him at the helm. "Can't you see Mr. Jones is sick?"

"Take the wheel an' let me turn in, then," said Socky. "Ef I got to keep awake all night, I gwine to sing fo' comp'ny."

"Yes, yes!" from the officer. "What sort of business is this, letting a man stand double tricks?" He stood up, limping around to try to restore circulation in his leg. "It burns like fire!" he muttered.

The men grumbled. Told him outright the brig was bad luck. They ought to leave her.

"All on us is likely to get bit the same way," said the man who slouched to the wheel.

"Wes' by sout'," said Socky.

Socky coiled himself against the rail and slept with the ease of an old deepwaterman.

In the early morning Mr. Jones was moaning. His leg was shockingly inflamed and suppurating.

"Ought to leave her!" persisted the men.

"Them other fellers was chased out by them pigs, I bet!"

"If we stops they'll eat us, 'stid o' chasin' of us out!"

"Carry on; don't be quitters!" answered Mr. Jones.



DAYLIGHT came again, and the pigs rooted around seeking food.

Mr. Jones propped himself against the companionway and took an observation as soon as the sun rose high enough. Socky brought him paper and pencil, chart and tables; none of the other men dared venture

into the cabin while the door was open.

When the brig's position was ascertained, only lacking the noon check, Socky procured food again, watching his chance to dart along to the galley and back. He brought all the cooked food he could carry. As they ate all together on the poop, they watched the ravenous pigs. Lacking food, the pigs fought each other. Suddenly a gaunt, leggy sow fell over, feet up, frothing at the mouth, her eyes upturned, bloodshot. The pack rended her.

"——! Those pigs have some sort of disease!" gasped Mr. Jones.

"Sure they have!" retorted the seaman nearest. "I told you that leg o' yours is p'isoned. Ought to quit her. That's what I say."

"Me, too!" chimed in another.

"Hyah, boys! Don' let a pack o' hawks cut yo' outa a lump o' salvage," laughed Socky. "Them pigs is only hungry. Watch me."

Socky dared the cabin again and brought up potatoes. First he tossed a few into the longboat. There was a contented grunting from within, and a black snout with a pink and black tip rubbed along the boat's gunwale seeking more.

"See?" the darky exclaimed.

He tossed the rest of the potatoes down among the pack. They fought for each scrap, and fought on after the last fragment had vanished. Another lean pig turned over, with eyes red and muzzle foam flecked.

"See?" growled the seamen.

Mr. Jones said nothing. His face was white with pain.

It was useless to order a man to do anything more than relieve the helm. Luckily the breeze was steady, the course lay fair for port, and the brig stepped along well. Mr. Jones took a noon observation, and when he had pricked off the place on the chart he collapsed. The men grumbled without shame. Socky worked at a new contrivance for the subjugating of the pigs, but he received neither attention nor assistance. Straddling the lee rail, he rode along until he came immediately over one of the square ports which all sailing ships have cut in their bulwarks to free the decks when seas come flooding. He hooked it up outside, leaving an aperture two feet by three. Darkness halted the work, but Socky was jubilant.

"Tomorrer we give them pigs a swim," he reported.

"Aw, shut up!" growled the man he addressed.

Socky fed them again, fed his pig in the longboat and took the helm for a trick that they permitted to last until midnight.

"He's only a —— nigger anyhow! Ain't even one of our crew!" they said.

When at length they grudgingly relieved him, he curled himself in a corner and slept happily.

At dawn Mr. Jones' leg was so painful and so ugly the men all gathered about him.

"Ought to leave her," they persisted.

"Don't talk like quitters, men!" he snapped.

"You'll lose that leg."

"I'll sail this brig to port! Let me hear no more of quitting."

Mr. Jones tried to stand. He could not. The men hung about the boat that had brought them from the steamer, talking low, dark of brow. A speck of light had danced briefly on the horizon before dawn had dulled all artificial lights. It could be only a steamer. If only it were coming toward them.

"There it is!" muttered one. "There! It'll pass us within half a mile."

They told Mr. Jones. He groaned, shaking his head.

"Shall we lower?" they asked.

"No, no! If you touch that boat I shall report you for mutiny!"

One of the men laughed derisively.

"If you don't come along with us, you'll report to Father Peter!" he growled.

Socky woke up, looked sleepily around and went to the galley to start a fire for breakfast. Pigs awoke, ran toward him, forcing him to slam the door against them.

The men were reminded of food.

"Don't mind it. There's water in the keg," their leader said. "Grab Mr. Jones."

"Don't touch me!" the officer cried, summoning all his strength. "I order you to stay on board this brig! It's mutiny if you don't!"

"Is it, matey? Is it mutiny?" whispered the least assertive seaman in the leader's ear.

"It's takin' care o' number one!" snarled the man, and slacked off the davit fall in his hand. "I ask you, sir, are you coming?"

"I tell you again, no! I order you to make that boat fast."

"Then be —— if I'll blame myself for

what happens to you!" was the retort. "Lower away, boys. That steamer'll be passing!"

Mr. Jones hauled himself to the wheel as the boat slipped into the water. His face was white and writhing. He hoped the boat would be capsized in the wash of the speeding brig. He heard a voice asking about Socky. Another voice cursed the questioner; said it was best to leave the — nigger. He would only tell tales anyhow.

Mr. Jones grinned crookedly. He filled his lungs, opened his mouth, and bawled Socky's name at the top of his voice; at the limit of his strength. The old negro burst from the galley and scrambled monkey-like along the rail, certain that the young officer was dying and needed him.

"They're quitting!" Mr. Jones gasped, turning his heavy head toward the rail. "Go on! Save yourself!"

"Me? I ain't gwine leave!"

Socky ran to look over the side. The boat, half-full of water, was just thrusting clear. Mr. Jones again summoned breath to rasp out:

"Go on, push off! There's nothing for you here! There won't be any salvage for you as long as I'm alive. You never signed on as a member of the crew. And I'm not going to die to please you!"

Socky stepped back from the rail, his shining face troubled as he gazed at the suffering man so gamely trying to steer the brig.

"Bless you, sir; I ain't gwine quit no hurted man. Sho' enough you ain't gwine die. I don't know nothin' about salvage, nudder. Ef you says I ain't got no claim, then I ain't. But dawggone ef I ain't gwine save jes' one o' dem hawgs for ol' Betsy, salvage or no salvage!"

Socky went back to his galley after watching the deserting boat until it almost reached the steamer. There was no indication that the steamer wished to look the brig over. The deserters had no doubt told a good tale. Socky made coffee and toast and took them to Mr. Jones.

"Ef you kin manage to steer, sir, I'll soon have them hawgs whar they belong."

 AS THE old negro straddled the rail, working on his pig trap, curious little shivers rippled down his back and crinkled his scalp under the grizzled wool. The hogs rooted and snuffled very

close to his bare toes. The very water gurgled suggestively as it slipped past the smooth hull. It laughed at him through the open port. Every block and sheave squealed like a litter of piglets. A parrel clacked far aloft; the sound almost scared him off the rail. It was like the clash of boars' tusks. Twang of braces, jangle of chain-sheets, the whipping crack of the tattered jib far out on the jib-boom, all these familiar sounds of a ship at sea were distorted into fiendish voices in the ears of the old negro.

"Yo' promised to marry me then, dahling,
"Yo' promised to marry me then, dahling,
Yo' promised to marry me then, dahling,
Under de coconut tree."

He tried to bolster up his courage with song, but the song had a quaver in it. His kinky hair crawled, tightening the skin. He thought of the injured man at the helm, wondered if he were still steering. The crazy hogs squealed and fought. In a fierce whirlwind scrimmage some flecks of foam splattered Socky's feet.

"Jes' a little while, brudders," he muttered, and drew up his legs.

Just before noon he had finished his contrivance for the driving out of the swine. He visited Mr. Jones, found him white of face with tight lips and glittering eyes, steering with grim courage.

"Bring my sextant!" the sick man muttered; then, "Hold me so I can see the horizon."

Socky waited until the observation was worked up and the brig's place pricked off on the chart which he brought. Then, with a keen glance at the officer's face, he hurried to clear out the pigs.

Outside the open port he had rigged a little platform. It was just a board, with two pieces of small timber butting against the ship's side, leaving a space between the sill of the port and the edge of the platform just wide enough to accommodate a pig. On the board he had nailed a wooden tub full of steaming mashed potatoes, rich and full as to aroma. Then, when he had armed himself with a four-foot handspike and resumed his perch on the rail, he cut the rope he had barred the port with while placing the bait.

"Dinner's ready, yo' hawgs!" he yelled, and the pigs came, jostling and fighting, squealing in the reek of the hot food. The

first to stand squarely in the opening paused. Socky whacked the brute over the rump with his club. There was a leap, a scramble, and piggy plunged into the bubbles slipping astern.

"Don' be bashful!" roared Socky, eyes shining, feet twitching.

In half an hour the last mad pig had vanished, and Socky took the untouched potatoes to his own pet pig in the longboat. Then he started to clean some of the filth from the brig's decks.

While taking Mr. Jones his supper, Socky noticed with some uneasiness that the breeze had hardened. There was far too much sail on the brig for one man to handle if it became necessary to shorten down. The courses hung in the buntlines, as they had been left by the original crew, but they were beginning to flog heavily. They ought to be tied up; furling was out of the question. One man might clew up and furl a royal alone, or even a topgallant-sail; but a course was too much.

"Ought to take in sail, sir," Socky suggested.

"Let it blow off her," muttered Mr. Jones, grinding his teeth in pain. Socky then saw that none of the supper had been eaten. "Who's going to take it in?"

"Sho' is a job," agreed Socky soberly.

He was more concerned at the moment with the officer's condition. If a man grew too ill to eat, he would soon be too ill to direct the brig's course. The wind might shorten sail for the brig, but it could not navigate. The sprays already flew high. Now and then a sea lifted up and poured in through the open port. One gurgling comber swept away the pig trap.

"You jes' sit still an' let me look at yo' laig," said the old negro.

Unhindered, he took his knife and slit all the clothing away, laying bare the ghastly laceration. He knew nothing of medicine or surgery, but, like most negroes, he had imbibed much lore of a sort from his old mammy. Whatever had been the trouble with the brig's deckload of hogs, there was little doubt that their teeth carried poison. Mr. Jones' leg was swollen to twice its size, a puffy, nasty-colored swelling that already had a trace of bad odor.

Socky brought hot water and a pile of sea-biscuit. From the cabin he fetched a sheet, more or less clean. Holding his knife in the hot water for several minutes, he

keenly watched the sufferer's face. The glittering eyes held steadfastly on the compass. Mr. Jones gave no sign that he knew what Socky was doing until the knife cut deeply into his flesh. Then he shifted his gaze until he looked Socky straight in the face.

"That's the only way you'll get any salvage, by murdering me!" he gasped, and fainted dead away.

Socky got up, lashed the helm, and returned to his task. The unjust words spoken hurt him. He muttered protestingly as he worked, as if the sick man could hear. He cut a cross in the flesh, deep and long; cut until the blood flowed free and fresh from firm flesh. Then he washed it, pressed it, dashed water into every part of the cuts and was glad the patient was unconscious.

The operation took a long time. Mr. Jones partly opened his eyes, felt the terrific pain, and swooned again. Socky chewed up hard tack, moistening the flinty biscuit first in hot water, for he had no teeth. The wind increased; the restrained courses thundered full of wind. He could do nothing. The main royal burst with a crack like gunfire. Socky gave it one glance and chewed on.

It took him an hour to prepare his poultice, and Mr. Jones was thoroughly awake before it was clapped on. The seas rose. One rumbling crest toppled over the bulwarks and nearly floated the longboat, filling it with water through the yawning cracks.

"Good Lawd, don' drown ol' Betsy's pig!" prayed Socky.

Socky steered, while Mr. Jones dozed in comparative freedom from the pain that had been his. By midnight the brig labored in a heavy sea that swept her continually. She was overpressed with sail. Socky listened to the sounds of cracking gear in the blackness aloft, his lips moving wordlessly, his childlike soul offering prayer. In the darkest hour of the morning watch the fore royal blew away. It left too much after sail. The brig still ran dead before the wind. Lashing the wheel again, unwilling to arouse the sick man, old Socky manfully hauled his stout heart to a panting burden trying to brail in the spanker. The brig sheered wide, almost broached to, while the heavy sail flogged. Between wheel and sail the heart of Socky was all but broken. He could do no more. He saw the white foam of a great sea that curled aboard and filled

the waist. The longboat floated clear of the chocks, the lashings burst, and he darted down into the hurly burly to rescue his old Betsy's hog.

He ran up the poop ladder with the squealing pig in his arms and saw the figure of Mr. Jones half-erect at the helm, with one arm out-flung; following the indicating arm Socky's tired old eyes flashed at the sight of a steady, clear white light that sat like a lantern of hope right in the midst of the leaping seas.

"Dawggone! That's ol' David's Head!" he yelled. "Hyah, pig, thar's yo' home!"

"Have to bear up!" cried Mr. Jones, forcing his tottering legs to hold him. "Can we haul out that spanker again?"

"Yo' stay steerin'. I can haul out ten spankers!" roared old Socky, and cast off the brails and laid hold of the outhaul. He sang as he hauled; then cut short the song and laughed happily—

"Dawggone ef I didn't fergit I ain't got no share in the salvage!"

He hauled, and Mr. Jones steered. The sick man started to say something; but the brig's headlong motion as she came to the wind wrenched him beyond words. He clung to the helm grimly.



THEY brought the brig into St. Georges harbor and anchored her.

Folks awoke in the morning wondering how she got there. The health officer came on board and promptly took Mr. Jones off to the hospital.

"Whoever plastered you with chewed bread saved you a leg, old chap!" the doctor said.

Old Socky stayed until an old crony was found to keep watch aboard the brig; then with his precious pig under his arm he took the stage to Hamilton. At Hamilton he took rowboat and sat in lordly pride while the boatman pulled him over the harbor to his little cottage. Other boatmen hailed him, having heard rumors of rich salvage.

"How about dat rowboat you busted fo' me, brudder?" laughed a passing daky.

Socky waved his hand, nodding.

"I hear yo' all brung in a brig full o' licker, an' yo' gwine be rich man. How come?" asked his own boatman, able to get breath to put the question at last.

He had started out from the townside full of the news, but the very portent of it stopped his mouth.

"Maybe, brother, maybe," said Socky, waving him on.

Fifty fathoms away from his home Socky lifted the pig to show it the beautiful sty it was to live in. Old Betsy was there on the rocks, leaning on her broom, her comely old face alight with joy. The pig twisted, squealed, squirmed loose and leaped from Socky's arms into the sea. Socky laughed.

"Right home he goes! Dawggone!"

Then his glad yell was hushed. He almost upset the boat. A long, lean, grey shape darted up out of the depths, turned over, showed a dirty white belly, and a yawning maw opened and closed upon the swimming pig right in sight of old Betsy's eyes.

"My —, ol' woman, you seen me lose that one!" Socky cried as he stepped ashore and mournfully greeted Betsy. "Dawggone, you got to believe I brung that one 'most home anyway!"

He seemed to dread the broom she leaned on. She threw it away, flung her comforting arms about his bowed neck, and glued her warm, glad lips to his.

"You git inside an' eat yo' vittles," she laughed and cried in one. "Don' yo' ever go buyin' pigs no mo'. Ef yo' ain't the longest-winded critter. Set down, do! Whut do we care fo' a pig? An' you folks kin git out o' that do'way. Drat you, Socky Adams! You bin 'most a month gittin' that pig, an' lose it right befo' my eyes! Eat some mo' codfish, honey."

There were people outside, white folks, who were insistent on speaking to the returned wanderer. Betsy kept them all outside. They tried to enter. She shut the door. They spoke through the window. She closed that and drew the shade.

"Them lawyers ain't up to no good," she said, pushing dishes before her man. "Such nonsense! That feller's talkin' a mess o' words about lookin' after yo' share in de brig. Says we kin very soon have a pig sty es big es th' Princess Hotel, an' es full. They can't fool ol' Betsy. No, sir! I don't believe in dreams, Heah, try a mite mo' o' that hash, dahling. Yo' ain't no dream, is yo', honey?"

While two lawyers sauntered away smilingly telling the neighbors they would soon have to say, "Sir," to old Socky, old Betsy filled her tiny cottage with song, caring nothing about salvage, knowing nothing of it; sure that she had her man again, and her glistening eyes told how glad she was.

Bandit's Glory

A Complete Novelette by Barry Scobee

Author of "Red Pig of the North," "Land Lore," etc.



THE loose-jointed freight-train rattled down the long slope and came to a stop in its own dust. A boy crawled out from the "rods" of a box-car and looked around.

Over across a side-track the stock-pens of a small Western cow and sheep town were discernible in the dusk. The town appeared to lay off to one side. The boy was not interested in its sparkling lights, but was concerned with getting a drink of water and washing off the cinders and grime of a hot day's travel in, under and between stock-cars and box-cars.

Stiff from cramped positions, he stumbled over to the stock-pens and climbed to the platform of the loading-chute. He was on the verge of descending into the pens to search for a watering-trough, when he saw a man coming up the cleated slant from the interior with a bale of straw on his shoulder.

The boy dodged behind the chute-gate lest he be seen and driven away or arrested for vagrancy.

The man crossed a gang-plank into a box-car set at the chute, and began to scatter the straw. He carried a pistol in a scabbard under his left arm. He seemed familiar, somehow—the tall, slim form; the lean face with its tiny black mustache and long nose, the high-peaked Western hat set at a jaunty angle.

The boy realized all at once that the man was working stealthily, walking on tiptoe, scattering the straw with a minimum of noise.

The lad's curiosity began to burn and instead of going on about his own business he pressed deeper into his nook to spy.

The jaunty-looking one brought two more bales of straw and scattered them in the same end of the car, and though it was growing darker swiftly, the sense of something familiar in the lean face kept hammering at the boy—elusive and tantalizing.

The man next brought two saddled horses. To one saddle was fixed a pair of saddle-bags and a rifle-boot with a rifle in it. The hoofs were muffled by the thick carpet of straw and made but little racket.

The horses secured, the man dragged the gang-plank aside with the evident intention of sliding the car door shut. It was in this act as he stooped that unexpectedly he saw the boy's feet hardly arm's length distant. He jerked upright, whipping out his pistol.

"——!" he ejaculated, humped like a startled cat. "Whata you doin' here?"

When he saw that the boy was not armed and was not making any resistance he relaxed.

"Hoh, a kid," he said.

His left hand came searching at the youngster's pockets.

"Left your guns at home on the piano, I see," he commented. "But what's this?"

He tugged a thick fold of papers from the non-resisting boy's coat-pocket. It was too dark to make them out. He paused, looked the lad up and down; he tried to scan the darkness all around, listened apprehensively for foot-falls. The only sound was the bumping of the freight-train that had brought the boy in.

"Go into the car," said the man in a low voice, motioning with his pistol.

The young tramp stepped across the gap on to the straw, the man following closely and flashing on a tiny pocket-lamp as he slid the door softly shut with his left arm. He looked at the boy up and down in the spot of light, then turned the light to the folded papers.

"Hoh!" he exclaimed in sudden amusement. "The whole nickel-novel family. Diamond Dicks and Wild Wests that made the naughty redskins bite the dust. Son, you're educated! But," he added petulantly, "why couldn't this have been a newspaper?"

He flung the papers down and gave a sharp order, though in a low voice:

"Get over there in the corner! That's it. Your snooping around and running into me has got you into trouble, kid. You're going to get gagged and tied and left here in the straw with my saddle horses."

"I know you!" said the boy most unexpectedly.

"What!" The man was taken back. "Who am I?"

"You're 'Silk-Saddle Jim!'"

For a full half-minute the man stood unmoving with the spot of light steadily on the sturdy, youthful face. At last he spoke, in the same low, controlled voice:

"Who are you? What you doing here? Where do you live?"

"I did live in Ohio," answered the boy, unafraid. "But I came out to Kansas to live with my uncle and I ran away last Saturday."

"Did you bum in on the rattler that just got in?"

"Yes."

There was a straightforward earnestness about the boy that one had to believe. Some of the hardness was gone from the adult voice at the next question and a keen curiosity was in its place—

"Have you seen a newspaper today?"

"Yes. Found one by the railroad-track this morning."

"What did it say —"

"About Silk-Saddle Jim? Said the sheriffs and marshals, think they've got him surrounded."

"Where?" The word was hard with interest.

"West of Roswell."

"Oh!" The relief was like a Spring thaw. "Quite a ways from here, isn't it? What else?"

"Said the two deputies had been found. The pair the papers told about that tried to slip up behind Silk-Saddle Jim and assassinate him but got shot for their treachery. They'd been laying wounded three or four days where the clever outlaw got 'em."

"Wounded, not killed, what? Go on."

"The paper said the law was hounding Silk like he was a coyote."

The boy spoke bitterly, showing his tremendous partiality for the outlaw, then triumphantly again:

"Said he'd went two days without anything to eat and was still game, dodging as cunning as a fox and fighting with the courage of a lion. Said he was a he-man. Said he was an artist like Charlie Chaplin and Paderewski and Babe Ruth—only in a different way."

"It said that!" The man was as pleased as Punch. "Did it say anything more about him being clever at repartee and polite to the ladies?"

"Uh—well, it said you had the manner of a Spanish don and could make a knight look like a roughneck."

"It did!"

The cold hardness was gone from the stranger. He was almost bubbling. The boy took quick advantage of the mood.

"You're Silk-Saddle Jim, aren't you?" he pleaded eagerly. "You're going to let me travel with you, aren't you?"

The man laughed at the eagerness but answered with finality:

"Should say not! I'm going out to grab me some chuck; you're going to stay bound and gagged right here in this straw."

The boy pondered this, then spoke out with initiative—

"You better not try that."

"Why?"

"Because if anybody finds me here I'll tell 'em you're Silk-Saddle Jim and are here in town."

Silence followed in the wake of the threat while the man pondered. And his pondering made him compromise.

"I'll take you out and get you some supper," he conceded grumpily. "What's your name?"

"Thanks!"

The boy stuck out a glad hand.

"I'm 'Automatic Jack'—shoot automatically, you know. Can you let me have a gun?"

"No, I can't let you have a gun! And look here, Automatic Jack, no tricks and no double-crossin' or I'll drill you with hot lead even if you are a kid! Savvy?"

II



HAVING cleaned up by scrubbing himself at a trough and by shaking the dust from his coat, Automatic Jack swaggered alongside his new-found swaggering friend into the town's constellation of glimmering lights.

"Now listen," the friend cautioned once, "if anybody gets inquisitive about us, we're brothers, savvy? Named Smith, Jack and Jim, say. We're from Kansas, say, looking over the country to buy a ranch."

"You acquainted in this jerkwater burg?" asked Jack.

"Through here month or so ago getting the lay of the land. I know where there's a home of good eats to stop that hungry growling of yours."

This made Automatic Jack warm to his friend more than ever. He already felt that never had there been such a man in the West before—jaunty, swaggering, lithe, easy of voice; and the street lights now showing a clean-cut, clean-shaven face, save for a tiny black mustache. Jack slid his old cap to one side to imitate the slant of the man's Stetson.

They came presently to a little hole-in-the-wall restaurant with a young woman behind the counter. Silk-Saddle Jim, as the boy charged him with being, showed his gleaming white teeth in a smile, twisted daintily at his little mustache, and spoke cozeningly—

"Fair maid, condescendest thou to serve us with thy best meat and nectar?"

"Bunk!" she retorted crisply. "What's your orders?"

"Come, come," wheedled Silk with his smile and easy words. "Thou knowest

what is good for two weary men like us. Give us a meal outa your own head, woman-prepared like a woman thinks about such things, won't you, deary? For two old bachelors like us?"

She blushed and smiled all of a sudden and agreed with a shrug.

"And give us the latest papers," he requested.

She shoved a bunch across to him.

Automatic Jack had big ears to hear with and big eyes to see, and he stood in open admiration of the man who could thus bring a crisp waitress to smiling in such a brief time. He swaggered up, mounted a stool, and with elbows impudently on the counter tried his tongue at the blarney.

"You don't need to rush," he said politely. "I've starved all day. I can stand it exactly one minute longer."

The woman laughed. Jack felt good. He remembered the gun under Silk's left arm and a black mask Silk had dropped. He thought in high spirits—

"Chee, this is the life for me!"

As they devoured the front-page stories of Silk-Saddle Jim, ate supper and bantered with the woman, Jack drank in every movement and word of the booted and spurred man; the boy lived in the glamour of dreams realized—dreams to be "out West" with guns and bandits and adventure.

"This is the life!"

If he didn't *think* it he felt it.

When at last the meal was finished the man, posing, put a query to the lady:

"Pawdon me, miss or madam, but can you recommend some light but goodly entertainment for we two innocents in the land? Something snappy, too, before the nine-thirty freight gets in and we have to pull out to the next town. A movie not too rough, you know, or——"

"White Apron" tittered and answered with mock hauteur—

"The Country Club is giving a dance, don't you know."

A quick, hard look snapped into Silk's black eyes and he forgot his banter.

"Is that a fact?" he demanded, then seeing her half-startled look bantered again in a nice change of expression. "If so, fair lady, we shall accept your kind invitation to attend."

"Sure. My hubby's the chef. Maybe he'll give you a hand-out."

Whereupon the gay Lothario put a

twenty-dollar gold piece down on the counter and told her to keep the change. The retort was sufficient to make her eyes admire, Automatic Jack was thrilled and every one laughed gaily as they separated. Jack swaggered out on the heels of his friend, glowing.

"This is the life! Money to throw at the birds, people to admire you, no work, no worry, all thrills and frills and good times!"

In the street Silk dropped his posing and spoke with edged words:

"Kid, I'm going out to that Country Club dance and you're going along and help me, savvy? I got to take you because I don't dare to leave you."

"Sure, I'll help you! What you going to do, Silk? Hold 'em up? Lend me a gun, won'tcha?"

"Listen, we're going to ride out there and we're going to ride back. We gotta look along here and find an auto that some boob has left the key in."

III



THE jaunty one parked the small roadster that he had appropriated, handily to the front entrance of the pretty little Country Club structure. He scanned other cars, and nooks, for lurkers and finding none—such as a woman stealing out for cigarets—went to the rear entrance.

A few minutes later the gay throng of dancers was brought to a breathless standstill at seeing, waltzing in from the serving-door, a white-aproned-and-capped chef with a loaf of bread speared on a forefinger and held aloft; to be followed by a white-garbed Mexican helper, then another, then a trampish-looking boy with a paper mask, and at last a tall, slender man with a rakish hat and a black mask under it, a tiny mustache, soft gray shirt with flowing tie and high-heeled riding-boots.

They all walked with a mincing stage step that the captain had shown them, keeping step to his music—a pistol beating time on a collander.

The dancers gave back. The little column marched over to the big fireplace. By peeping through the serving-door Silk had seen that a position there would best command the room.

The crowd began to murmur delightedly, thinking that Silk was a cowboy and that this was a special stunt arranged by some

one called "Naughty Wilson." They began to point at the chef with the loaf of bread elevated, and at the pistol-and-collander drum.

Automatic Jack thrilled. This was a regular Silk-Saddle Jim stunt! Only this was better than anything the papers had told about. Oh, this was the life!

When the column of five, hastily designed by the artist to spell-bind the dancers for a moment until he could gain a strategic position, arrived at the fireplace it halted, and the captain, stepping to a window seat, made a gay little speech:

"*M'sieu*, madams, I am elate to find so many of you present with such so beautiful necklaces, and sparkling rings, and lavalieres. I regret, oh, so much! to beg of you to hold up your hands above your heads."

Some of the women giggled. Nobody moved. People were doubtful. In a flash, as if angry, the gay speaker flung the collander into the middle of the room and fired a shot from his pistol straight above his head into the ceiling.

"Hands up!" he bawled.

The black eye of the automatic circled around the room, menacing.

"Hands up! If I have to shoot, I'll shoot to kill!"

Hands of men and women alike went up, neatly together as if in a callisthenic drill.

"Ah, that is more like it, *m'sieu's*, madams," acknowledged the bandit in his mincing, absurd imitation of Frenchified English. "Now I shall bother you to line up there along the walls. Quick! Single line!"

Once more he fired through the ceiling to give a high explosive incentive to their movements. In a singularly brief time the mixture of pretty gowns, dress-suits and business-suits were in a crudely drawn letter U around the room, with the bandit and his boy companion at the mouth of it.

How Automatic Jack thrilled with it all. Like the Wild West books. He felt that at last he had found his life's calling. Banditry! Just such as this. To be so cool, like Silk—humorous, suave, polite. Ah, this was the life!

"Thank you, my friends, beautifully done," praised the captain of the situation. "Now regard! My young helper here, Automatic Jack, will pass down the line with his hat for a few donations for the orphans—your purses and small change,

sparklers, watches, everything worth over a nickel, five cents, a half a dime!"

"My gown!" wailed a shrill voice.

"No, miss or madam, keep your gown, for mercy's sake."

There was a titter of laughter at this, the crowd relaxed a bit.

"You're a real, regular bandit, aren't you?" asked a pert girl. "Please say yes so I can tell 'em back East."

"Yes, and I'll bet the gate receipts you haven't anything on you worth a nickel or you wouldn't be so tickled."

Automatic Jack, having doffed his cap, strutted like a Sir Walter Raleigh or a Pirate Drake down to the head of the line and started in to collect the necklaces and lavalieres and other golden and bejeweled things that the women dropped with trembling fingers—and men, too.

This was the life! He snatched off the paper mask to see better.

"Fast! Hurry!" ordered the robber. "The motor's wasting gas just outside."

"Shell 'em off, shell 'em out!" sang out Automatic Jack gaily. "One and all, ladies and gents. No free seats tonight!"

The crowd, still with uplifted hands, laughed at this. A fat lady dropped in a great handful of things.

"Thanks, ever so much," murmured Jack.

This was the life!

"Oh, there goes my wedding-ring!" wailed a girlish voice. "Mr. Highwayman, I've only been married a week!"

"Keep it, little lady," answered the robber grandly. "I love to please the ladies. Give it back, Jack."

The genuine hero! Jack knew it. The fine courtesy of returning a wedding-ring! For a second or two he visioned the future with this man—helping the poor, righting wrongs, reading books in cozy bachelor rooms, attending the theatre, visiting art galleries, doing all the fine things that the elite among adventurers did.

"Hurry, hurry!" admonished the chief. "Gas is going up."

Jack made a discovery. On a big man's vest he found a sheriff's star, and under the coat a big revolver peeping out. He slid the gun from its nest and displayed a big, pearl-handled six-shooter. The man frowned prodigiously. People tittered. The man called Naughty Wilson murmured that it was the first time the sheriff had ever been caught asleep.

"Excuse me," said Jack, stuffing the gun into his shirt-front. "This is the life, isn't it!"

The man made no useless threats. Like a level-headed sheriff he gritted his teeth and endured the laughter.

A moment more and the job was complete. He went and stood beside the jaunty, watchful, darting-eyed Silk, who looked at the gun butt protruding from Jack's shirt, and laughed, and said—

"Get to the car with that stuff!"

He covered the boy's retreat. Before Jack was off the porch he heard the jaunty, smiling highwayman saying:

"Ah, ze gentlemen and ze ladies, I thank you for your gracious gifts. Silk-Saddle Jim wishes you one and all a pleasant good night and happy dreams!"

He came backing through the wide screen door of the club house.



THE little roadster leaped away from the wide veranda. But the robber was in no wise deluded about their chances.

"We've got to hit the fringe of town and lose ourselves," he said, stuffing his mask into a side pocket. "They'll overhaul us in no time."

It seemed to Jack less than no time before headlights were streaming behind them.

But the race was a glorious thing. Never in all his life had Jack been quite so thrilled. He trusted absolutely to Silk-Saddle Jim, whose escapes were legion. He held his captured gun back toward the line of coming cars and crooked his forefinger on the trigger, not firing but itching to—to feel the kick of the cartridge.

This was the life!

Then one of the pursuers leaped away from the others like a greyhound from a pack of dachshunds and came on with its headlights growing brighter and bigger. It came so swiftly that fear clutched at Jack and he sang out to Silk:

"They're about to get us! Drive, drive!"

The bandit risked one lightening glance back, grunted angrily. He peered hard ahead and to the sides in an effort to make out a side street down which to dodge. And he made out what seemed to be one and swerved for it.

But it was not a side street, merely a place where a picket-fence left off and a yard of shrubbery began. Before he could

check the little roadster they had plunged nose-on into a clutter of chicken-coops and shrubbery.

With the compulsion of Silk's shoving hands, Jack jumped out. Silk landed beside him, snatched the capful of purses and jewelry and with it tucked under one arm like a football ran off into the darkness. He was no longer paying any attention to Jack, but the boy kept on his heels.

They ran into a high woven wire fence and were forced to turn back. Silk had had the cunning to turn off the lights of the car he had driven just as he jumped out. Now as they ran across the lot seeking a way to escape the greyhound behind them turned in. Its lights swept on to them, stopped. Man and boy alike were blinded by the glare. A shot was fired, a man called out for them to surrender. They kept on leaping for the darkness however and in a few seconds were outside the pale of light.

Another shot came close to them. Silk stopped. Jack bumped into him and stopped also. The boy saw the bandit throw out his pistol and fire twice. He saw a man, not within the glare but within the glow of the headlights, throw up his arms and collapse, and he realized that for the first time in his life he had seen a man shot down.

Silk went tearing on through the darkness. Jack clung as closely as he could. They seemed to be plowing through a thicket of plum-bushes. Branches carried forward by Silk whipped back into Jack's face—stinging and scratching. In a moment or two they burst into the space of a side street.

They fled down the middle of the unpaved road. When they had gone about two blocks they were brought up by seeing a group of men and women under a corner light. As the two sidled off to dodge the obstacle a car came tearing along. Seeing the group the driver stopped and called to ask if a man and a boy had been seen. At the negative reply he told them that two bandits, a man and a boy, had shot and killed Naughty Wilson and were somewhere near. Then the car plunged on. The group gabbled excitedly. Silk, close to Jack, rasped out:

"Fine streak o' luck! Murder, and me so close to the Mexican border! Listen, kid, they're looking for a man and a boy together. We got to separate."

Jack did not wish this. He was afraid.

But there was no time for protest. Silk gave him a shove and himself ran off in another direction. In a bunch of seconds the darkness hid him. The boy saw the wisdom of the maneuver and did not try to follow. He headed toward where he surmised the stock-pens to be and was guided by the bump and rattle of a freight-train—he thought it might be the nine-thirty train that Silk had spoken of in the restaurant.

A bedlam developed in the town—the blare of automobile horns, shouting, bars of headlights searching like clutching hands along the streets. Jack kept to lawns and alleys, and in time came out into the open space between the fringe of town and the stock-pens and was compelled to race across.

He arrived without being molested. He made his way through the dark pens, snatched a drink at a trough and ran up the chute to the car door.

A string of cars was backing in on the side-track. Jack wondered if it was being done to pick up this supposed "empty." Fortunately the door was as the two had left it—unfastened. He slid it back and stepped inside just as the oncoming cars bumped. The impact sent him to his knees. It made the horses shuffle in the straw and one of the animals grunted.

Jack did not draw the door to at once but peered out hoping to see Silk-Saddle Jim coming. The engine jerked the string of cars along rapidly and with every turn of the wheels Jack's heart sank, for Silk did not appear.

Was he alone in a car bound for some unknown destination, hatless, with two saddled horses he could not well account for? Under ordinary circumstances he would not have cared, but now murder had been done and the town was aroused, and the whole country soon would be, in the search for a man and a boy.

Automatic Jack was in a cold sweat all at once. He jerked the door shut and got out the big revolver from his shirt, ready to shoot if anybody attempted to open the door.



THE string of cars was whip-cracked off the siding and shunted along the main line into the body of the train, or so Jack surmised. He stood there spraddle-legged, swaying to the car, gun in hand, a potential murderer. Then the whistle sounded for departure and the train began to jerk along. This meant escape, and as

swiftly as the boy's fear and outlaw instincts had come up they now abated; he stood there trembling, not wishing to kill anybody.

All at once he was terrifically tired. He wanted to lie down in the thick straw and rest. To size up the car he struck a match—and found himself looking into the eye of a gun. But across the gun he made out the countenance of Silk, and beheld Silk step from behind the horses.

For a moment Jack was cut through with the knowledge that Silk had not shown the consideration due from one pal to another—had not kept the car door open till the lad arrived, had not tarried to see if he were coming. But all this was swept aside by Silk's elated whisper:

"Some escape! Some escape! If the newspapers only knew about this! If they only knew how I slipped out of that tightening ring of men-hunters west of Roswell, and rode all night the last two nights, and exchanged a jaded nag today for these two good horses and an extra saddle, and heard the station agent say when I was hiding the horses in the pens just before dark——"

"Wasn't you afraid to come into town?" Jack asked in amazement.

"But I had to eat, kid. See the headline if the papers knew it: 'Silk-Saddle Jim risks neck to fill stomach!' Besides that I was washed and shaved and I wanted to get the news. Had to risk something. And luck fell my way as usual, for I heard the agent telling a fellow that the nine-thirty freight for El Paso would pick up these empties. So I got ready.

"Some escape! See the headlines! 'Once more Clever Bandit slips out of tight corner. Holds up Country Club bunch with gay talk. Forced by cruel circumstances to shoot down over-bold pursuer. Escapes with saddle horses in box-car of passing train.' Say bo, she's good!"

The train was rumbling now so that it was not easy to catch all the words. Silk's elation elated Jack, who felt a great deal better.

After a few minutes the bandit slid an end door of the car open a crack and peered out, then opened a side door boldly and drank in the cool night air that rushed by. Jack saw that they were out of town and in the open country. He saw and picked up his cap from the car floor.

"We're pulling up a pretty stiff grade," observed Silk.

He smoked at a cigaret, cautiously keeping the glowing end behind the door. The train went more slowly every moment, the engine puffing valiantly. Silk pinched the fire off his cigaret before he threw it away. Idly he leaned far out, scanning the train—and jerked back with an oath.

He ran to the rear of the car and pushed the end door back, without a word of explanation, and climbed out and up until he could see back along the train. When he got down he said bitterly:

"There's a crew of fools searching the train. Got lanterns and flash-lights. I'd hoped to make it to El Paso——"

He ran to the side door, Jack on his heels, and peered out. The train was barely creeping.

"Come on, we've got to get the horses out!" Silk ordered crisply.

He led both of them to the door and, instructing Jack to keep the head of the first one at the doorway, he got behind and shoved and slapped and bawled. But the horse resisted, bracing himself with his forefeet and scrambling about. Impatiently the bandit gave up and tried the other animal, which leaped down almost of its own accord. Then the first horse permitted himself to be shoved out. The man and the boy slid out after them.

Jack saw that they had got off close to a high water-tank and a pump-house. Boulders were scattered all about. Silk said something about this being the water-tank at the divide.

The horses, having got their bearings, were trotting forward between the train and the boulders. Silk, running forward, sang out to Jack to catch a horse and get it behind the pump-house before the gang searching the cars got abreast. Jack saw their lanterns and flash-lights.

Silk caught one horse easily. The other evaded Jack. It went snorting stiff-legged back among the rocks. The longer portion of the train was over the summit and it was swiftly picking up speed. Silk shouted to let the horse go and get himself out of sight. The night was light enough for a man or a horse to be seen some little distance. Jack understood. With himself out of sight the horse might be mistaken for a loose range horse, if the men hunters were not able to make out that it carried a saddle.

Jack ran for the rocks. The horse was cornered in a little *rincon* and had there been time could have been caught easily. Jack stumbled and went sprawling. This frightened the already alarmed animal, which jumped past the boy and stopped close to the train, snorting and confused. The train searchers were abreast now, throwing flashlights on the horse.

"It's got a saddle on!" shouted one.

A spot of light spread over Jack. The same voice shouted again:

"There's a man down! I told you there was a horse got off the train! It may be the robbers. Come on!"

Of the six or seven men on the car three made movements to climb down—and Jack heard-Silk Saddle Jim open fire. Two—three shots.

The fire was returned from the train, bullets spattering all around, but the men scrambled back to the top of the car and did not get off.

Jack tried for the horse again. Silk headed the animal off and got hold of the bridle. Then he began to storm:

"Of all the rum-dums! You've sure gummed up our chances to get to El Paso. Why didn't you catch that horse? What'd you fall down for?"

Jack said nothing. A curious side thought popped out of nowhere into his mind. What had Silk done with the hatful of money and jewelry?

"Don't stand there gapping!" bawled the bandit. "Get a-straddle of this beast. We've got to ride for it—and it's easier for you to ride till I need him than it is for me to lead him!"



AUTOMATIC JACK climbed into the saddle. Even under the threats and tongue lashings of the man he felt an exhilaration at being astride leather and headed somewhere into the open. It was not like old times, because he had ridden but little; it was like his boyish dreams of a wild, free life.

Silk ordered him to ride alongside and he did so. The bandit said they would find a road within two hundred yards, and in a moment they arrived at it, to see a half-dozen automobiles with glaring headlights streaming out from the town they had but left, only four or five miles distant.

"They're after us," said Silk. "It's fairly level on either side of this rocky divide.

Those headlights will search us out."

"But there's no fences here, looks like. We can leave the road."

"So can the cars. They can go anywhere, 'bout."

Silk-Saddle Jim sucked at the dilemma a moment. The oncoming cars made haste necessary. He looked around for covert—and saw it.

"Say, we'll hide right under their noses! Come on!"

He went galloping back to the tank and pump-house, the latter a low, square frame structure with a door in front and a window in the rear. While Jack held the little flash-light Silk tried key after key in a bunch he took from a pocket of his coat until the big padlock on the pump-house door clicked open.

They slid the wide door back. The flash-light showed a gasoline engine and pump, a dirt floor, a cot in one corner, the window at the back end. As if he had a well-defined plan in mind, Silk looked at the window, lifted the hook that held it shut and threw the sash open. Then he led the horses in and leaving Jack inside, locked the door. When this was done he climbed in at the window and closed it after him.

"The bunch on the train will be bulging back here pretty soon," he said. "They'll want to pick up our trail, but they won't think about looking in here for us—I hope. Kid, if you try any double-crossing I'll drill you with hot lead!"

"I ain't intending to double-cross you, Silk," answered Jack in a kind of boyish despair. "I aim to be game."

He lay down on the cot, worried at the harshness of his companion. A heavy drowsiness was upon him too, pressing at his lids. Silk sat down beside him.

The cot was near the window, so that by rising and taking a step or two Silk could be at the mucky panes. He had hardly sat down until he was up again, and down and up again, restless as a dog that scents trouble in the air. At the third peering through the cobwebby window he spoke:

"There's the autos from town passin'. Wonder where they think they're going? Man-hunting, the tinhorn sports! They think they're heroes."

Silk's scorn was hate. The idle humor of the Country Club was gone.

"When those punks on the train get back here we gotta stand by our horses to keep

'em quiet. If there's a cheep in here they'll hear it, and if it's you that crumbs the game—blooey goes Automatic Jack!"

For a little while Silk was still. Sounds of the night became audible. First one then the other horse sighed deeply. The pump-house creaked a little under the night wind's pressure, like a ship's sail.

Presently one sound was predominant in Jack's ears—the burr of the wind over the roof. It whistled softly at the corners, scratched at the shingles, murmured under the eaves. The burring sound thus created insulated the building so that other sounds seemed not to penetrate. It mesmerized and dulled the ears. It gave the uneasy feeling that men were approaching outside, unheard.

"The wind purrs like a throaty cat," said Silk-Saddle Jim. "I can't hear."

He got up, flung the window open and stood leaning across the sill on his fore-arms.

"Maybe it's a nutty idea, stopping here," he said, more to himself than to Jack. "If they catch me they'll hang me higher than a kite."

Automatic Jack remembered that the newspapers credited the popular bandit with three killings—a railway mail clerk, a bank cashier, and a small-town marshal. And now the club-man, Wilson, was added to the list.

Jack wondered what his own punishment at the hands of the law would be if he and Silk were taken, but he would not ask, for he was smarting from Silk's talk of double-crossing and drilling with hot lead. It was no right way, he felt, for one pal to talk to another.

The cool wind at the window must have cleared away some of Silk's restlessness, for presently he rehooked the window and lay down across the cot with Jack.

"Life's hard enough without standin' on your feet all night," he said with a touch of self-pity, then conversationally, "I've either made one awful blunder by stopping here or I've played one of the clever tricks of my career."

"You wouldn't desert me, would you, Silk?" pleaded Jack.

"Cordin' to how you conduct yourself," answered the man enigmatically.

The boy was mauled by a terrible desire to sleep and a fear to do so lest Silk actually slip away from him, but presently the flesh conquered and he slept heavily.

But not for long. He was pulled from the valley by Silk hissing in his ear and clutching his shoulder with hard fingers.

"Ssst! Easy! They're here. Slipped up on us in dark cars. They're creepin' through the boulders."

Jack popped wide-awake. He felt for his gun. It was gone.

"Silk," he whispered, "what'd you do with my gun?"

"I never got your gun," retorted the bandit. "Keep still!"

JACK sat on the edge of the cot and listened open-mouthed for sounds of the approaching men, but nothing came to him above the burr of the wind that insulated the structure. One of the horses sighed again, making saddle-leather creak. Automatic Jack remembered Silk's warning about keeping the animals quiet. He went fumbling and reaching through the pitch blackness for his horse. When he found its head he groped farther and located the other animal and Silk.

"Keep hold o' his muzzle," whispered the leader, "so he can't sneeze or nicker."

Jack thoughtfully did more than that. With his left hand he stroked the horses' nose gently, for he liked horses, but at the same time was ready to close down to stop any sound. And with his right hand he gripped the bit and halter rings to keep them from rattling should the animal shake its head.

The first sound from outside to prove Silk's statement that men were crawling up came startlingly—a man speaking out boldly:

"Come on, men. Nobody around here. They've headed for Mexico."

"Be a joke if they was hidin' up in the tank," said a chuckling voice, "or under one o' these rocks, or in the pump-house."

Lights gleamed through the crevices of the building from flash-lights. They made bright streaks across the horses and himself and Silk. Jack was glad the window panes were encrusted with dust.

The boy listened breathlessly. Forgotten now was the burr of the wind, with actual sounds for the ears to take hold of. A match was scratched on the side of the building, evidently to light a cigaret. Its nearness was startling. Jack moved ever so slightly and on the instant felt the nose of a pistol in Silk's hands against his ribs.

A kind of wonder came over the youngster.

Was it the lot of a bandit, such as this man, to mistrust even those who wished to be loyal? Jack couldn't understand it.

Probably a dozen men were outside. Their talk was plain.

"The rascals jumped their hosses off the train back there a ways," said one.

Whereupon the whole gang trooped off along the rails to see where the horses had been jumped down. As they came back they were making various comments.

"Ain't much of a jump down from a car door for a hoss."

"The saddle-horse was there in that little *rincon*. When the feller fell the animal trotted over close to the train. That's how come I see the saddle."

"Horses shod on the forefeet, far's I can make out on the hard ground."

The posse halted close to the pump-house again.

"What next?" came the query.

"Well, the pair of 'em is likely four five miles south o' here hittin' for the border around El Paso by this time."

"Er north, er east, er west. That Silk-Saddle Jim feller is a slick article, countin' what the papers say."

"Papers sure been makin' a hero outa him."

"Aw, the — sheets al'ays got to have somebody to fill space with—Cooee, or Gardner, or King Tut, or somebody else."

"It'd be right funny if they *had* holed up here in the pump-house."

Utter silence fell. Undoubtedly the posse was weighing the probability. It seemed to Jack that every eye was turned on the little board shell of a building and was X-raying through and seeing him and Silk and the horses standing there like bones in a body.

Two sets of feet moved away from the group, seekers after facts. One set went toward the front door, the other to the rear window.

The padlock on the door was lifted, was jerked and dropped.

Hands tugged at the window, dropped away and feet went scuffing back.

The hooked window, the padlocked door, instinctively satisfied the searchers. How could men and horses be in a building padlocked on the outside? The men who had tried door and window must have felt a bit sold, for they said nothing. A quiet voice summed up what all perhaps felt.

"They wouldn't be in there nohow, knowing the pumper might drop off the first train that happens along for his trick here to fill the tank. Come on, let's ride to town and get orders from the sheriff."

Their boots bickered away over the rocks like departing discord. Automatic Jack whispered out in the dark of the pump-house.

"The pumper—I'd forgot him."

"I hadn't!" snarled the bandit. "He comes pokin' in here he'll get tickled on the nose with a gun."

 SILK-SADDLE JIM'S mood seemed to change with every shift of the wind of fortune. In a moment the pumper was forgotten in a gale of suppressed mirth over the tricking of the men-hunters.

"Say, kid, I'm certainly pulling some great stuff tonight. Great stuff! He-he! Oughtn't to laugh this way at these country yaps. Boy, if the newspapers only knew about this!"

Then presently he was a little more serious.

"We can stay here till tomorrow night, when the country's settled down a little, without being bothered. Or could if it wasn't for that pumper."

With the recalling of this standing danger, Silk went to walking back and forth between the window and the horses, pondering.

Jack lay down again, wondering about his revolver.

The night and the danger weighed on him. The insulating burr of the wind across the roof kept him straining to hear over and beyond the sound. After a while he dropped into disturbed slumber. This was ended when a horse coughed and he sat up trembling all over. A train wailed out a long whistle far off.

Jack hurt all over from apprehension—the pumper might be on the train—but he kept his jaws grimly set to hold back words of whimpering from his partner. His thoughts wallowed in gloom. Here he was, a fugitive from justice, hunted; hunted by strangers who did not care one jot for him, who probably would not listen to a word of explanation, who wanted to get him into jail, or even desired to shoot him.

Had all those good heroes—the Daltons of Kansas and Oklahoma, old Doc Middleton of Nebraska, the Jameses and Youngers, Tracy of Washington—had they been

hounded this way, and cornered, and made to suffer? Had they been unfair and suspicious like Silk? Suddenly Jack forgot himself and turned to Silk with his questioning:

"Say, this'll blow over pretty soon, won't it? Two three days?"

"It'll let up before long," answered Silk.

"Then we'll know some peace of mind!"

With the prospect the boy flew to jubilation. "We'll get to some city. We'll live there. We'll sell our loot to a rich fence. We'll frequent the theaters. We'll——"

"Huh-huh-he!" chuckled Silk in rich scorn. "Automatic Jack, you been reading hero stuff. Peace o' mind! I ain't had any for a month, or a year for the matter of that. Frequent the theater? He-he-he! Automatic, I'm surprized at you."

"I won't know any peace of mind till I cross into Mexico and lose myself down in Chihuahua state, or Durango. Then it'll be women, *tequila* and cyards—real *livin'* and not play-acting in a theater."

Jack lay down again, wondering sorely how a man could be so polite and brave as Silk had been at the club and yet not care to do fine things. His thoughts were not defined beyond a boy's range of thinking—he felt these things more than he worded them.

The wail of the distant train came again, an appreciable bit nearer.

"Sounds like it's going to stop," said Jack.

"You're expectin' the pumper too hard," Silk jeered.

The whistle screeched again, the sound wind-scattered.

The man went to prowling with his flashlight around the pump.

"Whatcha doing?" asked the youngster.

No answer.

Silk found a length of two-inch metal pipe and wedged it between the back of the sliding door and a studding.

"What's it for?"

"That," the man unbent to answer, "is to hold the door shut if the pumper comes. He'll come up and unlock the door. Then he'll find it won't slide open. He'll go looking around for a pry or something. That will keep him busy till the train pulls out with the crew. Then I'll take this brace out and he'll be able to open the door. Purty slick, hey?"

"What'll happen then?"

"He'll stick his head in and—blooy! I won't be captured by no pumper."

The whistle wailed again—and again—and again. Silk stood by the door. Jack imagined he had his gun in hand. Jack got up, stirred around. For company he stroked his horse's neck. Silk snapped out for him to keep still, though he was making no noise.

The coming of the train grew to be a fearful thing. When at last it whistled close and then came thundering in, shaking the earth, Jack's bowels seemed drawn up into a knot, and his ears were strained for the crunch of cinders under foot and the rattle of the padlock on the door.

But no such sounds came. The crew banged at the water-tank, the train loosed its brakes, rolled on through the night. And no pumper had come.

Jack wondered how many trains there would be in the coming twenty-four hours. He felt that he had been here three or four days since the branches in the plum-thicket had whipped his face, there where the man had been shot down. But actually, he fully realized, not more than three or four hours could have elapsed.

Silk came from the door to the window.

"I've decided to hit out for Mexico," he said surprizingly.

"Leave here?"

"Can't hit for Mexico and stay here, can I? Sure leave here. If a pumper comes on some o' these trains and tries that door and finds it won't open like it always has he will be suspicious instanter. The whole country is suspicious. A closed door, an open gate, a turned over rock—anything different today from what it was yesterday will start up men to suspicioning. That pumper wouldn't look for a pry. He'd tell the train crew and they'd riddle this shack with bullets first—and look afterward."

"You're going to let me go along, ain't you, Silk?" asked Jack eagerly. "You wouldn't leave me back?"

"Sure you'll go along, so's you can't tattle about which way I've headed, and when."

"I wouldn't tattle, Silk. I wouldn't tattle on a pal."

"Not even in court, if we'd get caught?"

"I'd do what was right, Silk."

"You're a good kid," praised the leader, almost his first kind words since leaving the restaurant.

"And you won't run away from me no time, will you? Huh? No time?"

"I'll see you through, Jack, see you out of this. Sure enough."

Jack could have licked his hand in maudlin gratitude. Once more the future with a pal like this looked bright.

"Well, let's be slidin' through the window, kid," said Silk, "so we can unlock the door and get to eatin' up space toward Mexico."



OUT on the tableland under the stars, away from the enclosing sides of the pump-house, Jack felt naked, unprotected; yet he felt freedom too—they were moving, going some place, with the wind and the open country and the twinkling sky calling to valiant and pleasant things. Jack could have had the same thing as a cowboy or line rider, or sheep herder or ditch rider in the irrigation country more or less, but he did not know it.

The changeable bandit fell into a sulky silence, turning in the saddle now and then to scan the horizons for the gleaming headlights of automobiles that did not show up. Quite a while after starting, when Jack had got to drooping and nodding and catching at the horn, the leader drew up and tried to search the night-enshrouded landscape.

"I'm looking for a bonus hunter's shack," he said. "Saw it when I rode through here a month ago. Only place in a stretch half as big as some Eastern states that we can get water and chow."

"But won't they stop us?" asked Jack.

"No 'they' to it. Old man by himself, waitin' to prove up on his section so's he can sell it for a little money. I can scuttle him."

They rode on and on, pushing the horses hard, but no land taker's shack stalked out of the night to greet them.

The boy thought of many things—Silk's largeness and bravery, and his promise to stand by. The youngster nodded and swayed and wished for the end of this ride, but he never whimpered once. He rode worshipping his leader; a typical bandit of the West! Somebody worth imitating!

Once again in the darkness of the night Silk Saddle Jim drew up to scan the indistinct features of the landscape.

"The shack's on a little knoll of rocks," he said by way of explanation. "One room, boarded up and down. See it for miles. We'll hold up there till another night comes."

Yet no shack on a knoll appeared. The

isolation of the first hour did not hold, for twice across the land they saw the long fingers of automobile headlights reaching out, seeming to feel and peer. At last Silk said they had gone too far south. They had passed through a region of rocky knolls. They turned back into them, searching to the northwestward.

"We got to find it," said Silk, "or we won't have any shelter. Open country like this has got eyes and some day the men-hunters will pick us out same as a buzzard picks out a carcass."

"What would happen if we didn't find it?" asked Jack.

"We'd have to do some shootin' and ridin' we might otherwise get out of. Er maybe hole up on a hill-top through the hot sun all day. And starve. Oh, we'll find it all right. Right around here somewhere now."

They did not find it in searching northwesterly, so they rode east; and when it was still a minus quantity they angled off southwest. Their riding, counting the trip from the northward as the shaft, made a great crude arrow-head. But they found no nester's shanty.

"I thought I couldn't miss it," said Silk. "A little arroyo headed up near the place. Thought I couldn't miss that."

"What'll we do?" asked Jack, thirsty and weary and sleepy.

"Hunt," answered the outlaw succinctly. "We got to have a place to hole up time day breaks."

He rode on, laying out a vast circle in his mind, and Jack guided his horse in behind. Weary humans and weary beasts.

But day began to crawl over the lip of the world and scatter itself through the sky, yet still no shack outlined itself to their vision. The feeling of nakedness that Jack had experienced when first they left the pump-house returned ten-fold.

Dawn spread across the land like a breeze—and there was no shack.

A man and a boy on horses rode nowhere, defenseless, targets for any scanning eyes. They wanted to scurry like rats for an old floor, but there was no old floor for them. The land lay level in all directions, save that there were scattered boulders and rocky knolls, a mile-wide streak of them running northwest and southeast across the country, suggesting the scatterment of an ancient comet. They were lost. Silk had

missed the way. Road agents then, though they be clever and popular, were not infallible. Something of this was in Jack's thought and Silk must have read it in the expression, for his bloodshot eyes blazed.

"You ignorant little rum-dum!" he belowered, because he himself was at fault. "If you hadn't of fell down back there and scared the horse up close to the train for them to see I wouldn't be in this pinch."

Jack did not make the obvious retort—that it was Silk's mistake that they had missed the shack. He did not wish to antagonize the man on whom he depended so much.

To get away from these thoughts, Silk walked his horse on aimlessly. The red in the eastern sky began to redden the boulders, the dry brown grass, their faces. The bandit nodded to the highest nearby knoll, one somewhat isolated, and said he reckoned they'd hole up there for the day.

"We'll get — thirsty, an' the sun will burn holes in our shirts, but, Automatic Jack, men have got to keep a stiff upper lip and a hard backbone."

The knoll was twenty-five or thirty feet high. Disconsolately they climbed its steep and rock-strewn sides.

Reaching the flat top they saw they had a space, with boulders protruding through scant soil, about as long as a railway passenger-coach and somewhat wider. Actually it was a short, detached ridge rather than a knoll, but the man referred to it as a knoll.

It was not broad day. The other knolls and the scattered boulders, some higher than a man's head, still cast dense shadows. There was sufficient light to see that their view commanded a great circle of country.

"Open country like this has got eyes," Silk said again. "We got to throw our horses down behind these rocks so they won't loom up like a howlin' coyote against the moon. And you and I have got to keep down too, savvy? All day. We can't get up on our feet from now till dark tonight."

Silk threw the horses by twisting their necks. Together they hobbled the animals with the bridle reins. Then the two weary fugitives lay down on their backs in the narrow coyote paths between the rocks and slept.

Jack was awakened by the slow, steady swearing of Silk-Saddle Jim, and when he rolled over he saw the man sitting up, back

against a rock, hugging his knees and looking away over the country. The boy looked too, and saw off on a knoll three or four miles away, standing clear in the morning sun, the shack they had searched for and missed in the darkness of the night.

"I'm thirsty," said he, his first thought being of water.

"Don't go to spoutin' that stuff, kid. It'd be all our lives are worth to make a run for the shack. Some desert eye would see us."

Jack pondered the man, his harshness, his changeableness and what he had last said.

"What kind of eye?" Jack asked curiously, wondering if Silk had something definite in mind.

"Them, for one."

Silk pointed skyward. In the high blue floated a single speck.

"Buzzard, bone-picker. Their flyin' there, and circling, tells people for miles around that carrion, or maybe something about to become carrion, is down below."

Jack went a shade or two whiter than fatigue had made him.

"That's all right, kid," Silk said, hard but not harsh now. "Don't let your lip go slack. That buz won't pick our bones. We may be fugitives but we ain't trapped. Boy, we could mow down a regiment from here."

Because he had nothing else to do but fight off thoughts of thirst and heat, Jack fell to morbid day-dreaming. He visioned the fighting places, as he had seen them pictured or described, of the Youngers, Doc Middleton, the Daltons, Tracy; and particularly of Custer, of Indian massacre fame, on his hill-top.

Silk interrupted this dreaming, as he crawled on hands and knees hunting a strip of shade, by a muttered complaint—

"Fine place to spend the day!"

But to Jack it seemed more than that. It seemed the hill-top place of a last stand.



THE dun land stretched off to remote mountains and horizons and hazes. Here and there pools of dancing heat collected. In all the great round space not a living thing moved except, now, six buzzards high up against the frosty blue. The boulders were too hot for the hand. The horses' sides were almost cooked. Unable to rise, they would stir and groan in misery.

"The poor brutes," said Silk once.

Silk-Saddle Jim, hardened by a tricky, treacherous existence, a son of the Southwest cities and ranches, did not suffer from the heat and the danger as did the boy. He dozed frequently, but after the first loggy sleep Jack could sleep no more. His thoughts were too busy. Off there beyond the horizon somewhere many men and telegraph and telephone wires and automobiles were engaged in the search for him. What did they know? Where were they heading?

A dark beard was creeping out on Silk's jaws and chin, giving him a trampish, unkempt appearance. The heat was bringing out the grease of the skin. One eye-lid had a way of flickering in slumber, telling possibly of a weakness somewhere.

The stolen money and jewelry—Jack's thoughts went on—what had the robber done with them? What had become of the big revolver that he had lifted from the sheriff?

As Silk had led the horses into the box car, in his scheme to get away from the town and on toward the coveted safety of Mexico, Jack had seen a pair of saddle-bags behind one of the cantles. He had wondered more than once what the contents might be. The bags were still there, in readiness for flight. The man had not even ventured to remove the saddles from the suffering animals, though he talked words of pity for them.

Jack's curiosity to know what was in the bags grew and grew. He even began to convince himself that half of the haul of the previous night should be his.

He studied Silk. Though the man slept, yet it was with one ear keened, like a rabbit in a bunch of grass. Once Jack had flipped a pebble at a fly on a boulder and Silk had started up wide-awake. Now, if he went to the saddle-bags, he must scrape over a hundred pebbles on the journey.

Silk's suspicions and irascibility were being reflected in the youth. Jack decided to crawl to the saddle and investigate, to help himself maybe, to find out more about the man. His boyish mouth was grim.

He started. He strove to go noiselessly. He watched Silk's flickering lid. His breath was held until he had to gasp and pant. Once he counted forty while he carried his knee forward one step.

To his surprise he presently found himself at the bags with Silk still dozing.

Soundlessly he unbuckled the straps, lifted the stiff flap—and what he saw was like a slap in the face.

His pearl-handled revolver that he had taken from the sheriff!

So Silk had lied. For he had said that he did not take it, there in the pump-house last night.

Why had he lied? Why did any brave man lie? Jack was coming into his rightful man's heritage of *thinking*.

Discovery of the lie made him mistrustful. For a moment he contemplated getting the drop on the man as he slept and fried there in the sun and turning him over to the officers. It would be a way to save himself.

The bags engaged his attention again. He went delving in them. Out came the very purses and jewels he had taken from the trembling club people. Further down were bundles of paper money, and gold pieces, more jewels.

What a rich and careless bulk of evil! His fingers itched. He forgot Silk. On a flat rock he stacked glittering, golden chimneys of ten-dollar gold pieces. He contemplated them, thought of pocketing this cash as his share of the robbery—but in the end he shook his head. He would not divide with a pal unless the pal was agreeable.

He thought of arousing Silk to put the subject to issue. He looked up, and found Silk wide-awake grinning balefully at him.

"Hoh," taunted Silk-Saddle Jim, "you would, wouldja? Steal from a pal!"

"No," answered Jack, in that impelling way he had that had to be believed, "I wouldn't."

"I'll see that you don't," grunted Silk.

He crawled on all fours over to the saddle and lay down alongside the horse's back. Jack backed off, with the revolver sticking from his shirt front. Silk ignored this.

The waiting went on. The sun was high now. The bonus hunter's shack—so plain now, so elusive at night—was elongated until it looked to be twenty stories tall—work of the shimmering heat. Jack could no longer spit. His mouth was dry.

"Will you go to the shack tonight before we travel on south?" he asked, thinking of water.

"The horses will have to drink or they can't travel," answered Silk.

"You're still aimin' to let me go along, ain't you, Silk?" Wheedling was in Jack's voice again, and anxiety.

"Told you I'd stand by, didn't I? Now quit harpin' on that," flared the man.

More time passed. Jack lay on his back with the cap over his eyes. He kept lifting his shirt front and his pants away from the flesh in little pinches and pullings when the cloth became too hot to bear. After a while Silk spoke out conversationally:

"Look in the sky! Eleven bone-pickers up there now."

"Twelve," said Jack counting.

"Stick your head up, kid, and take a look. I haven't scanned the landscape for an hour with me periscopic eye, an' we don't want any o' these rural cops sneakin' up on us unawares."

Jack rolled over, got to his knees and looked cautiously over the boulders. It chanced that his gaze went first to the northward. He caught his breath sharply.

"An automobile's coming," he said.



SILK-SADDLE JIM was up on his knees in an instant peering over the rocks. The automobile was away to the northward about two miles, coming on easily. He looked to the west, the east, finished with the south.

"They've got us surrounded," he said in soft, unbelieving astonishment.

Jack saw too—a car in the east, the south; and two in the west, one near the shack—a mere moving speck—and one a mile from the knoll where the fugitives lay.

"I hadn't expected this," Silk murmured.

"The bone-pickers—" began Jack.

"No, not likely, kid. Most likely the old nester at the shack saw us against the sunrise before we got settled down up here and went off to break the news to the world. It'll be in the afternoon papers that I'm up here defending myself."

"Let's get out of this," Jack burst out anxiously. "Let's go, Silk."

"Go where?"

"Why—they know we're up here, it looks like. They'll shoot at this peak. We can crawl down in the rocks."

"The rocks end out there, just a break of 'em through here. Where would that get us?"

"But we don't have to lay here and get shot. We can crawl down there and hide."

"And lose our advantage of being up here able, more or less, to look down on 'em? I should say not! We ain't whipped, kid. Buzzards ain't going to pick our bones.

We'll stay and fight till night and then we can crawl away and escape. Meantime, we can get us a few scalps out there if they get too rambunctious and try to crowd us."

Jack pondered doubtfully.

"You're going to stick, ain'tcha?" barked Silk. "Stick by a pal?" Silk had no time to bother with rebellion.

Jack remembered his passing thought of getting the drop on Silk and turning him in. Face to face with the idea there was no argument to settle.

"Sure I'll stick by a pal," he said. "And you'll stick by me, hey, Silk?"

"Sure!"

And Silk stuck out his hand to seal the promise in a strong grip.

They gave their attention to the automobiles. The plan of coming in from all sides was obviously sound. It shut off any escape hole—in daylight at least. The men in the cars, Silk knew, were not all "rural cops" of his contempt. Some were tried men of the Southwest, having hunted men before, used to shooting, familiar with patient stalking, cunning in approach and fearless.

All the cars stopped approximately a mile from the knoll, as if by agreement. Five or six men climbed from each machine and stretched out in skirmish lines to the right of each machine. A circle of men that would narrow and narrow.

The fugitives kept their heads below the rocks and lay on their fronts looking out through interstices. The rocks afforded no shelter whatever from the eleven o'clock sun, but had they been down on the level there would have been no protection, or very little, from bullets. Up here on the knoll there was a little patch where bullets fired from below could not reach.

The circle moved inward even as it stretched out in the skirmish line. The men made no attempt at concealment, walking bolt upright and carrying their guns over the shoulder or down at the side—much like a line of advancing soldier skirmishers.

Silk crawled to his saddle and got the rifle from its boot, and delved into the saddle bags for more ammunition. In the process he brought out a revolver and part of a box of cartridges for it.

"These," said he, tossing the carton to Jack, "are the same size as the cannon you lifted from that sheriff. Be stingy with

'em. We'll need all we got to keep them buzzards from picking our bones."

Silk tried to speak lightly but he was grim.

Jack's hunger pains had left, but his thirst had increased. He seemed to be on fire.

Silk placed himself to command the south and east, Jack to overlook the north and west.

The roughest of the rock field, in the immediate neighborhood, ran down from the south end of the knoll, or little ridge. The men-hunters coming in from that direction were avoiding the *malpais*, or badlands, thus leaving a way out for desperate men—or so it appeared.

"We could fight 'em off for a week up here," boasted Silk, "if we had water and grub." And added cunningly: "You want to pick you off a guy now and then when they come in closer, to help hold 'em back till night. You're in it as bad as I am, you know—robbery and murder. That's what they'll call it, though the killin' was self-defense."

"I'll—do my best," said Jack.

Now that he was face to face with the seeming necessity, it was hard to kill men. It would be easier, he knew, if he were in the right and those men out there in the wrong.

"The first feller to come in good shooting-distance," Silk instructed, "is the first feller to get picked off by me with this thirty-thirty. We'll learn 'em before they get in a shot that they can't walk up on us like walkin' in to a free political speech. I'm itchin' to get me a few o' these conscientious law-enforcers down here anyhow. They been uppish to me ever since I barbered for a little while once in Albuquerque."

But in the matter of the first shot he was wrong, for he had scarcely finished speaking when a bullet *pinged* on the face of a boulder and went tumbling upward into the air like a tormented bumble-bee.

The fight had opened.



THE sun was at noon. The air was without movement. The vast dun circle of the globe was a sea of shimmering heat. And a man and a boy fought a last-stand fight against a tightening hoop of men-hunters ~~hid~~ in the rocks below the hill-top.

Silk-Saddle Jim, the outlaw, grim and alert and hating, crawled industriously from point to point around the rim of the little

flat and fired at any movement or sound in the rocks below. He dragged wherever he went the saddle-bags that contained the fortune in money and jewels. But the boy fought two battles. The second was with his conscience. For he could not bring himself to shoot at the men below. True, he fired now and then to deceive Silk and to keep the hunters from advancing too rapidly. But twice he had had an opportunity to shoot at exposed bodies and did not do so.

By failure to shoot at them he had not fully kept his word to stand by a pal. But had he shot to kill he would have been doing a terrible thing, for the men down below had not harmed him. He had harmed them—or the vague thing known as society, and a few men and women at a clubhouse.

Automatic Jack had become a thinking youth, therefore he twisted in mental agony between deceiving a pal and killing men who had done him no wrong.

The hunters had come far in an hour. They were pretty close. Twice a man's voice bawling orders had reached the two pairs of desperate ears on the summit. After the second bawling the ring ceased to tighten, it appeared, which set Silk to boasting.

"Hoh, boy, we're stopping 'em! I've winged two anyhow. We'll get outa here after dark, Automatic Jack."

"Don't call me Automatic Jack!" flung the boy in rebellion.

"Why, ain't that your name?"

"No, it's not my name. It's a silly thing."

Somehow the whole show seemed silly to Jack—his running away, his admiration of Silk-Saddle Jim, and what the papers said about him, all this suffering and thirst. Silly and useless.

He couldn't forget the man's harshness, changeableness, the lie he had told about the revolver. Silk was abhorrent to him—the sweaty, greasy, beard-grown face, the viciousness of his shooting to kill, his greed for the contents of the saddle-bags. Thinking of the last, Jack flared out on a new tack:

"Say, half of the stuff we stole last night is mine. I'll take it now."

"You will, will you?"

"It's in the saddle-bags you keep luggin' around with you. It's mine. I watched the kitchen door while you tamed the cooks. I passed my cap and collected the stuff."

"I coulda got along a lot better without

you, kid. When you get any o' the stuff in this pair o' bags the buzzards'll be pickin' my bones."

So ingratitude was added to the score against Silk in the boy's mind.

Silk's exultation that they had checked the assault was short-houred. For the ring tightened invisibly. Firing broke out heavier than ever, and nearer. Hot lead, splashing from boulders, stung through the clothing.

One horse, tormented by the splattering lead, half-maddened by the roasting sun-heat on its ribs, made a wild, scrambling effort to rise. The poor beast only got sufficiently high to stop a bullet—the first casualty on the hill-top of the last stand.

Silk was alarmed. The skin of his face was drawn tight, his jaw grimly set. He cursed in a low voice as he fired. He began to send darting looks here and there, lest the black eye of a gun come poking over a boulder and send bullets at them point-blank. He was like a coyote feeling itself becoming cornered by a force that excelled all its savagery and cunning and luck.

At times Jack was thrilled by the drama—the battle in the empty country—the heat, the lazy, floating, waiting birds high above, the utter loneliness—the last stand of a wild and desperate man.

Then the drama, and the tragedy, swept on to its finish more swiftly than was expected.

 SILK got to the horse that had been killed and cut the rifle-boot from the saddle. He came crawling toward Jack with it.

"Boy," he panted, "we got to surrender." "Surrender!"

It was a cry of relief on Jack's part, a way out of the two battles he was fighting so desperately.

"Surrender, yes. They've got us in a nut-cracker and ready to squeeze."

Hastily Silk tied a soiled, but white, handkerchief to the end of the stiff, leather rifle-boot and shoved it to the boy.

"Listen, Jack, you hold this above the rocks so they can see it, while I go down to the other end of this place and wave another one on my rifle-barrel. Savvy?"

"Sure."

"Now listen. They'll likely stop firin' and somebody will likely holler up and ask what we want. Tell 'em we'll surrender if

we can get terms. Tell 'em we'll give up if they'll guarantee to get us to jail and not lynch us. You know, talk up to 'em. Keep 'em busy. Negotiate for half an hour if you can. They'll weary of it after while and give in some to us. Get busy now."

Silk went crawling off toward the far end of the little ridge. He paused by the horse to get the saddle-bags again, which he hung over his neck. With rifle and pistol in his hands he went dragging along.

Jack elevated the white flag of surrender on the end of the gun-boot. The firing ceased. The day suddenly became oppressively quiet. But no voice called up to him, though he waited expectantly.

He looked around at Silk, and was surprised to see him with his burden of wealth sliding over the far edge of the hill-top, swiftly, covertly, instead of raising another flag of surrender.

And Jack comprehended.

Silk was trying to escape while attention was on the flag that Jack was waving. He was saving himself, taking all the wealth, leaving Jack to hold the sack after promising faithfully to stand by to the end.

Jack, hating now, checked up the crime of a broken promise against the man, and more ingratitude. About everything but cowardice.

He dropped the flag, wondering what to do, shocked and puzzled for a moment. Silk was out of sight now.

Then a shot split the air.

In thirty seconds or so Silk-Saddle Jim came crawling back over the rim of the hill. His rifle was gone, one arm hung limp. He had difficulty in making headway on his knees and right hand, since that hand still held his pistol.

The firing was renewed furiously, and nearer on all sides. Then, about the time Silk arrived at where Jack waited, it dropped away again in obedience to a bawling voice. When silence was gained the voice roared out an order from just below the hill-top.

"Hi, you up there! Surrender or we'll make buzzard bait out of ye! No more tricks o' tryin' to escape."

At this, Jack became witness of an awful thing—the break-up of a man.

At the sound of the voice of authority, of Right, so near and threatening, Silk, wounded, knew that he was at the end of

his tether. Half-cowering he raised his bloodshot, distended eyes to Jack and stared the boy through and through.

"They'll take me and hang me," he said in a dry voice. "Hang me."

"What you going to do?" asked Jack curiously.

Silk did not seem to hear. He stared at his pistol. Then he burst out:

"No, they won't hang me! I'll beat 'em to it!"

He stuck the muzzle of his gun against his head. He shut his eyes, screwed up his face, set his teeth. Jack was horrified. He kicked out at the pistol and missed. In the same motion he buried his face in his arms so as not to see.

But no shot sounded. He looked. Silk had withdrawn the gun and was staring at it in horror.

"Oh, I can't do that!" he wailed. "Can't do that."

"Hi, you birds up there!" the bull voice roared again. "Want to surrender?"

Silk, with his blank eyes, was staring through Jack again.

"Oh, m'sieus, madams, one moment please," he muttered.

"Hi, up there, answer or we'll come after ye."

"They'll take me and hang me, hang me, hang me," whimpered Silk, staring clear through Jack, it seemed, and never seeing him at all.

Then his manner changed. Inspiration spread over his countenance. He looked at Jack, seeing now.

"Boy," said he, "I got a great trick up my sleeve. Savvy? You surrender so you can tell the newspapers. Tell 'em Silk-Saddle Jim was game to the end. Tell the reporters Silk wouldn't give up, wouldn't surrender. Tell 'em he was the bravest man you ever saw."

Silk got to his haunches.

"Boy, this is the trick," he said.

The bandit begun slowly to rise to a standing posture. Agony was in his face. Jack comprehended at last. The man was standing up to let other men do what he had not the courage to do—kill himself. That *could* be a brave thing—but no. Silk was no sooner at his full height than he turned craven. He looked at the ground greedily, only a second's flash in his eyes it was, longing for the protection it had afforded him a moment before.

Then the bullets of a dozen guns found him.

Jack, realizing he had been left to hold the sack, to face the music alone, took up the rifle-boot with the handkerchief on the end and waved it, at the same time rising slowly to his feet.



ARMED and hot and dusty men crowded around Jack. One of them was the sheriff whose revolver the boy had taken. He looked at Jack with not unkindly eyes, and bellowed out at him:

"Last night, sonny, you thought it was 'the life.' Do you think it is 'the life' today?"

"No," answered Jack.

"You thought last night's side was the only side to this sort of life, didn't you? You didn't know about this other side till today, did you?"

"No."

"Well, sonny, there are always two sides, and the second side lasts a long time. And usually they are yellow, these gunmen who think they have a right to other people's pocketbooks and jewelry. One way or another they are most likely to be yellow. Where's my six-shooter, sonny? That's my fa-vo-rite company, that gun is."

Somebody handed the sheriff his revolver and he fondled it. The men looked at Silk and said among themselves—

"Game to the last."

"He wouldn't be taken alive."

And Jack, sorry for the thing that had been his pal, kept a still tongue about that last greedy look of Silk's toward the ground.

Except for the break-up of Silk-Saddle Jim, which he did not mention, Jack told the whole truth to the sheriff, from leaving his home, adopting the furious name of Automatic Jack, bumming the trains, meeting Silk, holding up the club, the escape, killing of Wilson—everything down to the last detail, with such exposure of his own acts and motives that the officers were compelled to recognize it as the truth. When it was all finished the sheriff was puzzled, or seemed to be.

"Why," said he, "I don't hardly know what to do with you."

"I'm wi-willing to take my medicine," Jack declared.

What the sheriff did was to take Jack into a conference with the prosecuting attorney and judge. There are such men

and cases. They telegraphed to Jack's uncle in Kansas to see what sort of man he was and what he thought about it, and when the answer came they exacted a promise from Jack—and it was willingly given—never to turn bandit again, and bought a ticket for him and started him homeward.

When newspaper men got hold of Jack

and quizzed about the last stand of Silk-Saddle Jim the boy held a close tongue again and refused to be led away from the loyalty he considered due the memory of a man he had once regarded as a pal, though the pal-ship had failed.

"Just do me one favor," he said to the news men. "Please don't call me Automatic Jack. It's silly."



The Aftermath by H.H. Perry

IT APPEARED as if some gigantic commander-in-chief of the sector had been able to roar out a command—"Eyes Up!"—a command given in such tones that it reached to the bottom of every cellar, to the back corner in every dugout and to the guards in the trenches; a command that was a relief from the monotonous duty of watching that bare, brown, desolate area just ahead of them.

Every soldier was straining his eyes in the effort to follow the fight being waged upon the diamond-shaped formation of four American airplanes far above them. Some of them had envied and many had expressed their disapproval of the seemingly easy life lived by the men in the Air Service. Yet of the thousands who were now getting the roofs of their mouths sunburnt as they gazed upwards there were few who would have changed places willingly with the men above them.

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Up. Up so high that the naked eye could see them only when the sun glinted on a silver-shaded fuselage. They crossed the lines at seventeen thousand feet, headed north; and their path became marked with clouds of curious shape, which appeared apparently out of nowhere.

Clear cut at first were these clouds—even the long streamers from some of them—but as you watched they rapidly grew indistinct, a bit hazy, although outlined against the blue of a perfect Summer sky. The different clouds were evenly spaced in geometrical figures; brackets they were, put up to try to turn those four invading planes away from the railway center to the north-east.

The flight-leader in number one plane smiled grimly as his glance caught the dull red, boiling heart in the burst of an anti-aircraft shell two hundred feet to his right, the sudden, rattling crash of the explosion drowning the roar of the four motors. Before

the ring was out of his ears the black smoke was a mere dot behind them, whisked away by the terrific speed of their onrush.

"Pity we can't charge admission to this show today, Chappy," he drawled into his end of the speaking tube.

"Yes, they are using a good deal of ammunition for us. Bad sky for them, too; no background," replied Chapman, an artillery officer turned observer. "Hope they keep it up, though; it's better than that patrol following us."

This last in reference to the German line patrol of three Pfalz scouts that followed them. They had offered no resistance to the crossing of the line by the diamond-shaped formation, but had turned and were now trailing some five hundred yards behind.

A formation of four Salmsons was not to be attacked by only three Pfalz. At this altitude the Salmsons handled as lightly as a feather, while the Pfalz were inclined to side slip at the least opportunity. The air was so thin and their wing-spread so small that they had considerable difficulty in keeping their balance. Their opportunity would come if that formation should be broken.

Just south of Conflans, Young, observer in number three machine, ducked into his cockpit to get his camera ready. Photographs were to be taken of the railroad from Conflans to Metz. Young was exposing thirty-six plates; Waller, in number two, twenty-four; the overlapped pictures would form a continuous mosaic map of a territory two kilometers wide and thirty long. Chapman was not carrying a camera, and the hole in the bottom of his cockpit, some eight by ten inches, was closed by a loosely fitted board so that he would not step through. His duty was to keep Schaeffer, the flight-leader, on the correct course, and it is not an easy matter to direct another man how to follow a winding railroad course three and a half miles below while traveling at a speed of a hundred miles an hour.

The pilots of the other three planes had easier jobs, for they had merely to keep their respective places in the formation. There would be no inclination to lag with those three wasp-like shapes following so closely in the rear.

Chapman guided Schaeffer slightly to the west, then in an even sweeping turn headed him east. Just as they passed above the railroad station at Conflans he signaled

Young, whose head disappeared behind his windshield as he snapped his first picture. Swinging first to the right and taking a quick look ahead, then glancing around and under the tail of his plane, then over and to the left ahead and back around, he was the eyes of his plane, for Schaeffer's position between the wings gave him a clear view ahead only.

Many hours of hard study had made the ground beneath him better known than his own front yard in the States. Every glance at the ground was directed at a munition or supply dump, an important road-crossing, a loading-rack on the railroad below, or some place of importance where there might be activity of the enemy. He jotted down some notes and called others through the speaking tube to Schaeffer.

A close scrutiny of German Corps Headquarters southeast of Conflans disclosed two automobiles on the driveway of the chateau, tiny knots about them being evidently the occupants who had come out to watch the fight above.

Young reappeared at short intervals as he snatched a quick glance around and behind him. Regularly each twenty seconds, though, his head went down as he snapped the big camera, suspended by rubber bands, that occupied the cockpit with him. When he had completed six of the last magazine of twelve plates he waved across to Waller on the opposite side of the formation. Waller turned to his safety belt and faced forward, ready to start his series of twenty-four as soon as Young signaled.

The observer in plane number four, occupying the rear position of the diamond, started firing at the still distant Pfalz. Both he and the pilot were new men, unaccustomed to the sector. This was their second trip over the lines. A few shots and he realized that swinging a double machine gun at an altitude that would bother a mountaineer, was far different from target practice at Tours.

Chapman smiled as he saw him turn down his seat and sit down; smiled because he remembered his own weariness the first time he had exerted himself at the altitude at which they were flying. He would have to speak to him, for one could not permit the slightest relaxation in watchfulness so far back of the lines.

Young nodded across to Waller, stood up, twisted in his safety belt so that he

faced the rear and commenced a visual reconnaissance similar to that of Chapman. Waller in turn, disappeared into his cockpit.



THERE came a sudden stutter in the roar of number one plane. Chapman, without a second's hesitation, depressed the muzzles of his machine guns and fired a short burst, the tracer bullets carrying ten feet above number three plane. Hughes, pilot of the plane, may have been looking at him, but it was no time to take a chance.

If Schaeffer's motor was in trouble, Hughes must take the lead. The mission, as assigned, must be completed. The motor, a nine-cylinder, radial type was now working perfectly, but that short break had caused a loss of forty feet in altitude. Hughes moved into number one position, with Schaeffer flying just underneath him.

Perhaps it had been just a drop of water in the gasoline, but—no—one cylinder cut out again. Schaeffer banked sharply to the right, heading for the nearest point on the lines, thirty-one kilometers distant.

The three planes, now in a V-shape formation, moved into the east with disconcerting suddenness; surrounded by ever increasing numbers of shell bursts as the distance to Metz decreased.

"If you have any time left over from nursing that gas control you might spend it in praying that the patrol from the Second Pursuit sees us in something less than ten minutes," said Chapman as he warily watched the three Pfalz as they closed in.

Schaeffer, working hard, merely grunted. He was using his last bit of flying knowledge and skill to increase their speed, but the best he could do was to hold that at which they had been flying, and now he had the nose of their plane down so that they would not cross the lines with an altitude of more than a thousand feet.

Chapman's room-mate once told the story that when he asked Chapman a question at night, he had to reach over and feel his head to see whether he was shaking it yes or no. Getting into a tight place always unlocked his lips as wine did those of most of his fellows. He fought with a constant stream of badinage directed at his companion.

Schaeffer, remembering the record Chapman had made at Cazaux, the supreme gunnery school of the French, and the two planes already marked up to the credit of

the man behind him, felt a cool confidence as he glanced over his shoulder. The Pfalz were still four hundred yards away.

A couple of short bursts, one from each gun, as Chapman made certain of their readiness, again brought Schaeffer's head around with a sharp jerk. He marveled at the seemingly slow speed of the tracers as their trajectory curved over and apparently plunged into the vortex of the propeller of the leading plane.

"Wish we had one of those he-Americans the orators back home talk about so much. One of the kind that's as good as half a dozen Germans. He wouldn't want a much better opportunity to show his stuff. Gilbert brought out some ice from Toul this morning. Said he was going to try to make a French chef discover a way to make ice cream for dinner. Just our luck," came forward to Schaeffer through the tube.

A staccato roar as Chapman turned both guns loose—short, sharp bursts of three or four shots each—a quick aim in between—yet, so rapid were they, that it seemed like continuous shooting. Schaeffer noticed the blue smoke from the German's tracers passing just above their plane. The leading Pfalz had tried to create a diversion by flying straight in, shooting as he came, while the second German made an effort to come up under the tail of their plane, protected from Chapman's guns by the rudder and stabilizers of the latter's own machine.

Quick and accurate shooting had broken it up. Even the most reckless man can well afford to hesitate before running into the face of a double machine gun superbly handled. The third Pfalz was still four hundred yards straight back and a hundred and fifty above them, the two just engaged were now back in their respective positions on each side, about four hundred yards in the rear.

"They are all three coming this time, Schaeff. Got to break it up before it starts. Skid to your left, give me just time to get a burst at that man, then zoom her up and I will try to pick off the one above. Shoot."

Schaeffer shoved with his foot and their plane skidded much as an automobile will skid on a wet pavement. The German on the left caught the movement just a moment too late. There was a roar from Chapman's guns as his own plane steadied, and the Pfalz banked sharply to the left and then straightened out; but an aileron

flickered in the wind showing that the control wire had been shot in two.

"Huh, need some practise—should have gotten him," the pilot heard Chapman mutter to himself.

Schaeffer pulled the control stick as far back as it would go, and the nose of the machine pointed up. Easing the stick forward, he zoomed until he had lost most of his speed; then he flattened out and again tilted the nose down a bit to help out the hard-worked motor, still laboring under the handicap of one cylinder out.

Braced as Chapman was for the zoom, the tremendous centrifugal force of that sudden rise caused his knees to buckle under him. Straining every muscle, he took off the magazine of his right gun and replaced it with a fresh one. In contradiction, the sudden leveling off, after the climb, lifted him clear of the floor, held in only by the safety belt; and he had to hold his hands over the magazine rack to keep them from sailing out of the cockpit.

The two remaining Pfalz were quick to take advantage of his momentary helplessness and closed in, shooting as they brought their guns to bear. A quick burst and the one above banked away instantly; his position was a poor one. The one below was better located, and a dry whispering patter, like rain on a thatched roof, sounded to the right as his bullets cut through the upper wing. He was overshooting as he had done the first time.

Schaeffer banked the least bit, giving Chapman a better position, but the other plane was already pulling away. A moment later, while he was changing the magazine of his left gun, they came back again. The empty magazine was suddenly twitched out of his hand by a bullet, leaving it bleeding, numb from the shock. Schaeffer aided the best he could from his great store of air tricks, with sudden skids and quick banks; but it seemed to him an impossible task for Chapman to fend off those two daring, darting shapes, so persistent in their attacks.

Yet that cool, calm flow of ordinary conversation continued to come forward through the speaking-tube. He wondered whether Chapman was really thinking of what he was talking about. Afterwards he could think of nothing so suggestive of that afternoon as the remembrance of a whistling boy trying to drown a maddened bee with a garden hose.

Four dots appeared far above and ahead. A second glance and they had resolved into four Spads. How they came! Nose down, with motor wide open, wires screaming at such a pitch that the ear drums ached, they plunged downward in an effort to cut those two Pfalz off from a retreat to the north.

The Germans saw them. Before Schaeffer could announce the arrival of the Spads, Chapman's guns became silent, for the Pfalz had turned and streaked into the north. Four Spads, holding the advantage of both speed and altitude, were too much of a handicap. They roared past, fifty feet above the Salmson; the leader flinging up his arm in greeting as he recognized the two men below, luncheon companions of the day before in Nancy.

A quarter of a mile beyond they rushed, and with a *renversement* they came back; the three behind playing follow-the-leader with the exactness of swallows. Weaving back and forth they held their position in the rear, escorting that wounded plane back to safety. Wounded it was, for the mechanics counted sixty-three bullet holes that night.

 THE archies opened up again, the shells from the small type of ordnance cracking spitefully. They had none of the resonant roar of the larger shells that had hindered their advance before. Schaeffer skidded and sideslipped as the bursts came too close, changing his altitude constantly in the effort to confuse the range-finders below. A few, gray, dirty-looking, irregular lines on the ground below slipped to the rear and they were again over French soil.

Chapman's chest was heaving from his exertions as he waved a farewell to the Spads. For more than two hours he had been shifting from side to side in that narrow cockpit, exposed from the waist up to the hurricane blast of the propeller. He was tired out, but a good bath to remove the stench of burned castor oil, and that extra good dinner promised by Gilbert, would set him up again.

He leaned into the air-blast, using it as a support, as he pushed up his goggles and massaged his almost frozen cheeks and the deep indentations around his eyes made by the tightly clasped glasses. Never for an instant did he relax his vigilance, however, for more than one plane had been surprised

and shot down after it had reached the comparative safety of its own side of the lines.

He had not noticed that during the recent fight the small board which closed the opening used for the camera had been blown out of the hole and back into the rear of the fuselage. The exposed hole was only eight by ten inches, just large enough to allow his foot, encased in fur-lined boots, to go through. He had pressed his weight against the guns during the fight and his feet had not strayed near the opening. Straightened up and braced against the propeller blast he had narrowly missed it several times, and now as he swung on the lookout from side to side, he put his left foot directly over the hole and—it went through.

Down—down—down—would he never stop! Terror—utter, unthinking terror—gripped him. A breath of icy coldness swept over him, the hair even under the tightly fitted helmet seemed to stand on end, and surely his blood was now water, so weak did he feel. Unconsciously he clasped the *tourelle* on which the guns rested, and struggled to rise.

The effort brought conscious thought, and with what he afterward considered a greater effort than he had put forth during the fight, he pulled his leg out of the hole. The heavy, fur-lined overalls had allowed it to go through up to a short distance above the knee. His legs refused to support him; so he leaned on the guns as he turned down the seat which rested against the side of the cockpit, and sat down. He grinned at himself, grinned openly, yet even as he grinned, nausea seized him, and he had to lean over the side of the cockpit.

Schaeffer idled the motor and glided in for the landing. A slight bump and a roll; then before the plane had come to a stop he threw on the motor and taxied toward the hangers. The mechanics met them, braced themselves against the wings and turned the plane in line. He speeded up the motor and cut off the gas, and when the propeller had ceased turning he switched off the magnetos.

Chapman felt cold and chafed his hands, in spite of the fact that he had on a fur-lined coat on a hot August day. The flight sergeant walked around the crowd that was examining the many evidences of the fight and, catching sight of Chapman's bloody hands and white face, jumped up on the side of the fuselage.

"Are you hurt, sir," he asked, reaching in to unfasten the safety belt.

Chapman shook his head and pointed at the hole in the floor.

"No. I stepped through that hole without knowing it was open, and it got my goat."

The sergeant nodded understandingly. Long service among the flyers had shown him that at times a most trivial thing could break a man's nerve. It was a nerve-racking occupation but—Chapman was hardly that kind. He could hear Schaeffer, still in the forward cockpit, telling of the fight the two had waged for almost twenty miles; and the man beside him did not seem to be concerned about it in the least.

He offered his shoulder as the observer swung his feet out of the plane and dropped to the ground. It would be a big loss to the squadron if Chapman fell out just at present, even for the customary two weeks' leave, he thought as he unfastened the helmet and flying-suit of the other.

Major Raymond, commanding the squadron, walked up.

"Chappy, I'm leading the Third Flight over on a twilight reconnaissance. Need an observer. Want to go along?"

Chapman shook himself, much as a dog does that has just climbed out of a cold pool of water; he thought possibly of that hot bath and excellent dinner that would have to be put off for three hours, and replied:

"Yes, sir. Be right over."

The sergeant draped a very dirty oil-covered flying-suit over a clean shirt sleeve as he walked beside the other into the tent of the medical detachment.



CLEMENT H. CHAPMAN, successful cotton broker, stood in line before the Cinema Theater box office, his wife beside him. They moved forward, bought tickets and passed into the auditorium, securing aisle seats in the rear. The picture which featured an eminent comedian, was just starting. They laughed at his escapades in an amusement park and followed with smiles his different fortunes until he came to where a balloon ascension was to be made. He was given a pennant to tie to the network of the balloon, and climbed, by way of a ladder and the network, to the top of the big bag. The aeronaut was helped into the basket, the weights thrown off the wicker railing, and

the balloon ascended, but without the aeronaut; for the bottom had come out of the basket and he was left standing on the ground, explaining to his colleagues.

The comedian on top of the bag saw the predicament he was now in, climbed down around the balloon by holding to the network, reached the wicker railing, and with a look of relief on his face dropped his legs down into the basket. They went through and dangled underneath.

Instantly, five years became nothing to Chapman. He was Chapman, the observer, almost unconscious with terror. He stumbled up the aisle, his knees shaking, almost too weak to walk, his stomach

gripping and retching horribly. He leaned against the railing in the rear and, feeling his hand ache, he looked down at it, expecting to see it covered with blood, so completely had the years been swept away.

Instead, there were soft fingers crushing it; his wife had followed him up the aisle. For a second he looked at her without recognition; then, the pain helping, he came back to the present.

"Shall I have a taxi called, dear?" she inquired anxiously.

He shrugged, much as he had that afternoon five years before, grinned, and, taking one of her hands in his, he moved back down the aisle to the seats they had just vacated.

A DETERMINED BEAR

by Eugene Cunningham

IN CALIFORNIA'S gold-rush days, a log cabin beside the trail some fifteen miles from Nevada City was known as The Grizzly Bear House, the hostelry taking its name from a great bearskin nailed to the wall. The two partners operating it divided labor, one cooking, the other tending bar. We know nothing of the cook, but the bar-tender by his own admission was the mightiest of hunters, specializing in bears. He lost no opportunity to describe his many encounters and exhibited certain of his many scars in proof of each story. For he was as jealous of his reputation for truthfulness as that for bear-slaying.

After supper one evening, when the miner-guests sat story-telling before the fire, the bartender began to speak of his hunting. A young miner present listened silently, but the hunter became irritated by the expression with which the young man received each story. The hunter talked on, glaring more and more ferociously at this quiet-smiling listener, hitching his Colt farther and farther forward on his belt.

He told his banner-yarn, of a huge grizzly which jumped him so suddenly that he could only turn and run. The bear, he said, followed mile after mile. At last, the hunter sprinted desperately until far enough ahead

to turn and shoot. The bear only shook his head impatiently, and winked, though his left eye had been shot out. Still he pursued. Once more the hunter raced frantically ahead, reloaded, whirled and fired. Again the bear shook his head and blinked contemptuously. Well he might wink, for this time the unerring bullet had taken his right eye.

"Gentlemen!" said the hunter solemnly. "He was blind. You'd think that was enough for a bear. I've considered it a lot and I believe it would have been plenty for most bears. But this one was a mighty remarkable animal. He just ducked his head to the ground and began to follow me by scent! I shot him full of bullets, dodging all the time."

The young miner was no longer smiling. He was rocking where he sat and fairly bellowing.

"Whut," inquired the hunter pointedly, leaning forward, "might you be pleased to laugh at?"

"At—" commenced the young miner, wiping the tears from his eyes. Then he chanced to notice the old hunter's hand, which had drawn his Colt from the holster and held it on his knee—"at the bare chance you gave that bear," he finished gravely.

I AM a stranger in a thriving city where I don't know a soul. I lived here thirteen years ago when this was just a little town and hereabout I spent many hard days. I was poor as an old lame fox, and, at times, I daresay, almost as downhearted. It is human to be downhearted, and like many other things that are human it is very foolish. It has, however, like most other things, some good to it; for it enables one to sympathize with other folks who are down and feeling out. I hope I'll never lose sympathy for any poor beggar weaker than myself. If I do, then I shall have failed to learn the lesson of my years, and shall deserve disasters.

I lived in a chilly shack on the outskirts of town, and, what with the cracks in the boards and the cracks in my purse, couldn't keep the cold out. My baby was very ill, and the old dog used to sit outside the door and whine his sympathy. I've known dogs who knew more of bravery and also of gentleness than many a man I've seen has seemed to know.

It was this same dull time of year when there are thousands of laborers idle; when many of the well-fed folk, seeing us on the road with our blankets on our backs, look at us disapprovingly and speak of us as "tramps." I used to go to the town every day early in the morning and stand on the sidewalk till after dark was fallen, asking every farmer I saw for a job. There were no jobs. It was a hungry Winter—very. Men who had never done a fair day's work in their lives, like as not, would nod at me; pointing me out to the police—"a tramp."

At last, one night when it was blowing hard and raining dismally, just as I was about to turn my way for the little thin-walled place that stood for home, a short old fellow with shaggy whiskers came up to me from around the corner, and—

"D'ye want a job?" said he.

"I sure do," said I.

"Can ye milk?" said he.

I'd never tried, so of course as far as I knew I could, and I replied accordingly—

"Sure."

To be a milker in California one must be able to milk thirty cows twice a day, and to feed and tend them, and their calves, and the attendant hogs; also to run the separator, and to keep it and all milk-cans and buckets clean; to clean the big cow-barn after each milking also. A man has to have a good grip to milk so many cows. Milkers suffer horribly from cramp; their hands swelling and the skin on their fingers becoming drum-tight. To do any other work besides the milking and "chores" that go therewith is considered impossible. A milk-er is not expected to do anything else—except by such old shag-whiskers as this old party.

I didn't know a thing about all this. I knew I was a first-rate oarsman and I reckoned my grip might hold out. When we came to the farm and I sat down to my first cow the old fellow asked me—

"How many's the most ye ever milked, mister?"

"One," said I, since, some years previously, I had milked a cow.

He had sixty-three head of fine Jerseys, most of them registered stock. Maybe you know what they are? Sensitive, nervous, delicate, and at all times to be handled with gentleness and some skill.

"One," yelled the old gazebo, and swore and cursed. "What the blankety, why the blankety, —" I wonder the church steeples in towns eight miles away did not all fall down.

"I want a milker," he bellowed.

"Well, ain't I a-milkin'?" I says.

"Blankety—gg — ypp — blankety blank!" he roared and rumbled. "That's only one cow an' there's twenty-nine more!"

"Keep your shirt on, mister," says I, "I cain't do more'n one at a time."

Since the night was wet and wintry, and the hour was late, and there was no hope to get a man to replace me that night, he went off to milk the other string of cows, saying to his son:

"You git a move on ye, bye, that thar feller ain't no milker. We're agoin' to hev to milk his cows fer him."

They *didn't* milk one of my cows. Not much. *I wasn't riz up that way!*

In later days the old fellow confessed to me that once he had hired another sailor and told me how the man took a four-horse team to the field and drove them at a fast trot, himself running behind with the plow-handles. He said that luckily he saw what was going on and went to the field in time to save his team from being foundered.

I think life's a bit of a joke, don't you?

That farmer, like a-many of his kind, was a hard old man, and wonderous close-fisted. Though he had over sixty cows milking and there was an immense amount of milk on the place, he allowed me but one quart of milk a day—and me with a very sick baby! If I wanted any skim milk I had to buy it!

Yet one couldn't but like the queer old fellow, despite his meanness. He had fought his own way up from poverty, and through untold years of slavery—as so many of the farmers do.

He had a saving grace of humor, and laughed readily. When he laughed his hard eyes grew soft and for a moment he and I forgot the eternal milking, the mud in the yard, knee-deep, the ailing calves, half-broken horses, and the whole dull round of slow farm drudgery. What a good thing laughter is, isn't it?

The old scoundrel took full advantage of my ignorance. Ordinarily a milker, as soon as the milking is done and the chores are attended to, rests, and takes some sleep, preparing for the afternoon milking. This old son of a hickory-limb sent me off to the field with a team as soon as my milking was done and my breakfast, immediately after, eaten. He and his son fed the calves and hogs and did the lighter work in the morning only. I had an hour at midday, most of which I spent in blissful sleep, and forgetfulness. Lest a moment of my time should be lost I was never called from the field for the afternoon milking till every cow was in her stanchion. Then, not infrequently, I was permitted to milk five or six or even a dozen of the other string as well as my own string of thirty head. Friend farmer and his son took life easy. I might have refused to work as I worked; but a man hates not to take up a challenge, don't you think? Old hickory-stick was slaving for coin. I was making, trying to make, my slavery a joke. I'm glad I did. For thus man masters his master.

Often they went off to town as soon as

the afternoon milking was over, leaving me all the chores to do; so that I seldom got to bed till between nine and ten at night. There was small sleep there. Lord! How utterly weary I often was when they awakened me at three-thirty of a chill morning. Then they waited while I got the cows into the barn, and while the warm breath and bodies of the stock warmed the building.

Usually, trudging about the corrals, knee-deep in slime and mud, and filthy water, I sang some old snatch of a halyard chanter.

The cows awakened to the tune of,

"Sally Brown was a bright mulatto," or "We'll go no more a-roving," or "Johnnie's gone, what shall I do?"

"*Johnnie's gone to Hilo!*"

The old Hickory-stick and his farmer son thought me a bit touched in my top story, no doubt. Taken all round, once my baby was better, it was a bit of a joke.

I quit him when the winds of April came, and poppies wreathed his fields in gold. We parted great friends, with mutual esteem.

"I allers did hear tell as you sailor fellers was a tough lot," said he.

"Who wouldn't sell a farm and go to sea!" said I, laughing.

A week later we met on the town street and he begged me to return to him, offering me better wages—which must have strained his heart strings.

I was told, a day or so ago, that he is dead. I'm sorry. I should have liked to go out there again, to watch him at his milking; to have heard him laugh, and see his hard old eyes grow soft; life's hardnesses forgotten!

Life is odd, isn't it? And Adventure a queer girl?

I sometimes think that a man may turn prosaic things into Adventure!

I like to think of that old codger's eyes all twinkle-brightly, and to recall his gruff cackle when he laughed. I believe that there were times when he grew for an instant's quite unconscious of his barns, and cows, and hay-stacks, and the dreary mortgage that made him such a slave—the mortgage that bent and bowed, and likely, at the last, quite broke him—poor old fighter!

He's dead, and I'm still here, and still sing—

"We'll go no more a-roving," and yet rove every day! I'm glad to be alive and in the midst of Adventure.



Author of "Antonio," "Blood Brothers," etc.

HIS mother's huge tail swished the last layer of gravel over him with a: "There! That's all he'll get from me" sort of action; and, turning, she dropped slowly downstream with dozens of her sisters, big spent fish, exhausted after the spawning.

All that day the great, steel-blue salmon, distended with roe and milt, had fought and courted in the narrow, shallow water of the "reds," as the spawning grounds are called, whilst the sun marched slowly across the valley from crest to opposite crest of those eternal, frowning mountains, who in their time must assuredly have witnessed this gay and animated scene thousands, aye, hundreds of thousands of times, and taken no notice.

And by the time day dawned again all were gone. The river was left to itself; to its normal population; to the fat cock-tailed, white-breasted, magnified wren-like dippers, to the echoing crow of the cock grouse, to the splash of the antlered stags at drink, to the scream of the kingly golden eagle and the short, guttural bark of the crafty mountain fox. Gone were they all—gone the mighty, hook-jawed, veteran "kippers," monster male salmon of forty pounds or more; gone the big, sleek "baggit," or females scarcely less in girth at any rate; and gone too the smaller salmon, there, some of them, for the first time, to struggle among

this crowded meeting of the giants, to fight for young and gleaming wives, and of course to lose; gone the dead; gone the wounded and the dying. The great yearly love carnival of the mature salmon in the headwaters of the big river was over, and they had left to go down to the sea; whilst, like tramps and thieves that hunt over the ground after a great fair, the lesser denizens of the air and water, the prowling ones, the clearers-up, were already busy among the shallows and the dead.

Really, if you come to think of it, there was no special reason why his mother should trouble her head overmuch about him. Why should she? He was somewhere about—exact counting as to units does not matter in this case—the twenty-first thousandth egg she had laid at that spawning, and she had good right to her view that she had, for that year at any rate, done her duty by the great and honored tribe to which she belonged. She had slid down-stream contented, she to rest in the females' pools, her enormous husband—who was the largest kipper, as she was the biggest baggit, on the reds, or spawning-ground—to the males' pools; for the sexes do not associate—if indeed they tolerate each other—after the honeymoon.

Under three feet of gravel, in the groove that his mother's strong tail had scooped out, lay he, a pink salmon egg, among

thousands of other pink salmon eggs—in the next groove, belonging to another fish, they were white, and others were red—all about a quarter of an inch in size. And even here he was not safe; even here that terrible, grim battle of life, that awful struggle for existence, that dread *ux victis* which is the grim motto of the wild, began in earnest, and never ceased till the day of his death.

A big, bronze, spotted trout, showing something of the salmon in his shape but of a heavier build, came nosing and rooting in the gravel with his horny jaws, as if the old rascal knew or guessed or smelled what was there. He could no more than dislodge a few of the topmost eggs, a score or so that had escaped deep burial, and these he ate. Our egg was not among them.

Again, a few days later, the hoofs of a herd of stampeded red deer kicked aside some of the gravel, and the stream, taking a few eggs, carried them off, to be instantly rushed at and swallowed by the trout's smaller relations lower down. Our egg was not among those either.

And the days passed, slow, silent, filled always with the song of the laughing waters, who knew of the secret of the million eggs hidden in their golden bed, and kept it. A very old male salmon, the last of the kippers to leave the reaches above the reds, to which he had wandered or been driven, rolled slowly by, then nearly stranded, beat his great tail, swung clear, and turned heavily to snatch up the eggs that his struggles had disclosed.

Our egg was not among these either. But it was an omen. Even his own tribe, it appeared, were ranged on the side of his enemies, and none more deadly than they, either.

Ninety-four days after the spawning, a spate, or freshet, born of the Winter snows up among the hills, came surging down-stream, whilst the stream itself rose bank-high. The force of the water came round a curve above the reds, and hit and hollowed out the opposite bank, and then swung down on the reds with fortunately much reduced force. But even so its eroding power was great. It scooped like a hundred spades at the bed of the stream, digging great grooves in the sacred gravel, and the exposed salmon eggs went dancing and rolling down-stream in thousands.

Some found safe anchorage behind pebble or boulder lower down, some stranded

and went out, as a draft blows out the light of a little lamp barely lighted, and some—fetched up in the crops of birds and the mouths of rats, water-shrews and fishes. Yet once again our egg was not among them; but yet once more too he might have been; it was all a question of fate—or chance, if one likes to give fate that *incognito*.



ONE hundred and seventy days after the spawning—long after even the last and most exhausted of the great fish had traveled down the hundred miles or so of river and gone to sea, that is—our egg hatched out. As a son of the mightiest of all the great salmon in the reds, he was not altogether exciting. Nature is no show artist; with her the end justifies the means—any means. He was little more than a line, a dark streak, and a none too active one at that, half-seen, half-guessed, and scarcely more than half an inch in length, lying hidden among the pebbles. He carried his food with him—yolk of the egg from whence he was born—in a sack, not on his back exactly but underneath; and it was to him at once drink and food, for he had no other, and lived on it entirely for the next six weeks, absorbing it slowly, as one who gathers strength for a great struggle. At this stage even he assumed a title of his own, and enjoyed the rank of “alevin.”

And the first of the water-birds moving up to the arctic to nest—at least, he wasn't going to nest south of Shetland anyway—a diving goosander, came mooching about among the gravel, and gobbled up a beak partly full of his brothers and sisters to right and left of him; but he, by the merciful falling-back of a misplaced sheltering pebble, escaped. That would be in about the end of April, or perhaps the beginning of May, when these last things happened, and the birds were beginning to dream of eggs and the buds were not more than hazing the woods.

Six weeks later, sackless and hungry, the young salmon was dodging about among the golden pebbles, beneath which he vanished like an electric spark at the slightest hint of danger—at the vision of the great spotted trout, at the shadow of the trim, lanky heron, at the paddle and commotion of wandering wild duck. He was now rather more than an inch in length, of a light brown, barred with dusky bars and

spotted a little with orange and black, and the tail of him was forked; in short, he had attained to the style and title of a "parr," or "smolt," or "samlet," a young salmon who had never seen the sea; and his transverse dusky bars—a dozen of them, maybe—were his badge. When once he had been to sea those bands would vanish.

With greater strength and a new hunger came a greater desire for adventure. The parr was no longer content to cower under stones, living on a sack of yolk. He would see the world. All around him were hundreds of parrs doing the same thing, but, unlike him, not all succeeding, for even at that age he gave promise of greater things than the majority, and was a bit more virile than they—if that were possible.

The larva of some water insect, wriggling by on the current, caught his eye. He saw it cross the ten-foot, or so, circle of light at the surface, and, shooting out like a drawn streak, caught it. In an instant he was back again behind his particular pebble. It was his first kill; cleanly done, too. A mature fish could have executed it no better.

Three times he dashed out and made his kill at passing larvæ with like result, but at the fourth attempt the finger of fate descended upon him. Without warning a medium-sized trout—all golden-bronze he showed as he turned—who had been lying under the bank, watching the hundreds of adventurous young parrs making their first kills, rushed at him with open mouth.

It was, however, just precisely that gleam of golden-bronze, as the trout reflected the upper light, that saved the parr. The trout reflected the color of his surroundings unless he heeled over—of the bottom, of the banks—showing a faint greeny-fawn, and would have reflected the color of his surroundings if he himself had been colored red, or yellow, or sky-blue, for that matter. It is a peculiar power which water imparts, in fact.

That telltale gleam flashed to the quick eyes of the watchful parr, and—he was gone. The trout had done something in the way of getting from one place to another himself, but even at that stage the parr proved that the salmon is the king of swimmers, which none can beat. He looked like a thin dark line which had been precipitated from gravel to mid-stream; and the baffled trout, after following a few yards, turned back.

There were plenty more parr where that one came from anyhow.

Our parr, however, was in difficulties instantly again. His rush had carried him out into mid-stream, where he had never ventured before. Here he got the full force of the current, and that was nothing to laugh at. It would have beaten a man. It did beat our parr.

Instinct told him that to attempt to swim against it for any time meant suffocation—any fish knows this axiom, by the way—and he could not tread water, so he went whirling down-stream, not pleased at all, but glad enough if he could steer end on and not go helplessly twirling broadside, like a dead caterpillar, to strand on the nearest bank, or foolishly break his back on a boulder.

That journey was exactly two miles in length, and for a first journey not what one might call altogether dull. He missed the lunge of a red-breasted diver's beak—they call her a loon in America—nearly left one blade of his forked tail in the splayed mandibles of a canary-capped wigeon—which is a species of wild duck—went clean between the jaws of a crafty old pike, hoary with accumulated sin—what was he doing there anyway?—and executed a lightning glide and an electric-quick waggle in and out among half a dozen respectable-sized trout anchored behind boulders, like ships head to stream; just waiting right there till food floated down. Oh, no! That journey was no Sunday afternoon sleep, not by a hatful, and only about the slickest baby fish that ever flicked a tail-blade could have got through with it on the *outside* of the folk he met.



THE stream was broader here down below, slower and deeper; and there were grand old buttressed trees that grew along the banks and held out mighty, shadowing arms over the water, as priests that deliver a blessing—they did; a blessing of shade. But thicker and closer vegetation meant insects; and insects, some of them, are, from a baby fish's point of view, the very deuce; and our parr had soon to learn that the world held other "die-quicks" beside fish and birds.

Searching quietly under the bank for a nifty hiding-place, whence to swoop out upon anything killable that passed, he was aware of a phenomenon. It looked something like a darkish spoon without a handle,

and was about the same size perhaps; but it had legs, and they paddled—the hind ones were flattened like oars—and it had eyes that glared, and it had jaws working crosswise, not up and down, that might easily— No, by Jove, not by a riverful were they going to crack the backbone of a little parr this session.

There was a movement through the water, quick, intense, dangerous. It looked as if a black line had been ruled very quickly, and vanished. That was the phenomenon making its rush at the parr—the phenomenon whose official name was water-beetle.

But even at that age a salmon is a salmon, and no common bait for vulgar insects. Came a streak in front of the black line, a zigzag something as if two electric wires had come in contact in that place. It was not that, though. It was the reflection of light from above on the silvery sides of the parr as he heeled over on one of those dizzy darts which for sheer, amazing, swift agility can not, so far as I know, be beaten by any other fish that swims.

This hurtling, twisting speed is brought to its highest pitch of perfection in the salmon and sets the fish apart as on a pinnacle. There is a sporting dash about this silver king, a thoroughbred fury of movement, of, one might put it, courageous "go," which impels admiration.

Fortunately our parr was not alone. Out of the millions of eggs deposited on the reds higher up some had escaped Nemesis, and, like our parr, swum, or been floated, downstream, and could be seen lurking everywhere under the bank, or darting about in and out of the misty water shadows like dusky fantoms.

Still our parr was the biggest, if only by a fraction; a trifle the strongest, a little quicker, a shade more virile. He it was who was first in the streaking rush after the fat cockchafer grub that came floating down; he who beat his confrères by an eighth of an inch in the glorious hunt after an unfortunate young minnow; he especially, among other fortunate ones, who, from agility and speed alone, did not happen to be there when the half-duck, half-diver shape of the redbreasted merganser came shooting up-stream along the bottom, striking right and left with her serrated beak, from which there was no hope of slipping out, at the shooting, whizzing, hurtling and entirely surprised parr scattering

every way at once; and he was the murderer who was first to discover the half-dozen poor little alevins, who, with yolk-sacks still attached, had been helplessly swept down by the stream and stranded in a sheltering shallow. In that hour he became a cannibal, and learned, as his monstrous father had known for many years now, that there are few more appetizing meals for a salmon than another salmon sufficiently smaller to be easily slain.

Even so, if our parr had been alone, nothing probably could have saved him from his swarming foes, and it was only the fact that there were always others around him just a trifle less agile or swift or alert and wary, just a little less trouble to catch—though goodness knows none of them were easy prey—it was only this fact which saved him at all even at the start.

Birds in the air, as a rule—there are a few exceptions perhaps, of which the heron may turn out to be one—eat more for their weight than mammals do, because of their tremendous energy. Fish in the water, in like manner, although their life is divided between strenuous action and periods of long quiescence, appear to eat more than mammals for their weight.

Nevertheless there appeared to be something lacking in the stream and the river which nothing could make up. Worms, grubs, alevins, drowned or drowning insects; little fish, tadpoles, and even very young, weak or wounded parr were not, it seemed, enough for the samlet. He did not grow, or at least he grew absurdly little, and the same was the case with his fellows. Something was wanting—almost as if fresh water was not his home after all, and he was but waiting in enforced idleness, and on enforced half-starvation fare, against the time when he should be called to his natural sphere.

True, he took all he could get. Not much passed his way small enough for him to tackle that he did not tackle it, and a good many were attacked who were not small enough. Those who had hunted him at first began to give it up as a bad job and turn to other and less elusive and active parr. In some cases the tables were reversed, indeed, and those who had hunted him at first became the hunted themselves.

All through the long, hot Summer you might any day make out his dusky barred body and the spots on his gently waving

tail as he hung, head to stream, behind a gigantic boulder at the tail of the pool. He commanded the back-wash here, and anything helpless, or exhausted by the rush of water without, would, as likely as not, be washed round behind this boulder. If pursued by the trout, who lived farther down but occasionally raided up as far as here, the parr vanished like a drawn whippy line into a maze of half-submerged boulders, where it was useless, if not unhealthful—one trout got wedged here between two boulders, and the water-beetles and others attended his funeral—to follow.

The mergansers and their cousins the divers did not, as a rule, come here, but fished the open pool; and the only foes he had really to worry much about were the stalking, wading heron, whose beak was death, the jeweled kingfisher, who pounced down, not telling whence he came, and the neat little, bad-tempered little, pugnacious, white-bellied water-shrew, who *when* he slept, lived in the bank, but occupied most of his time running up and down the bed of the stream, eating things. He was quite small really—not more than six inches long—and very pretty, with his black jacket and white waistcoat; but his weak point was that he never seemed able to gage his limits, and was always getting into trouble with things larger than himself. The parr was not larger; and a six-inch, black-and-white dimon with *red* hooked teeth, who could dive and swim, represented to him the personification of nightmare.

Beside these foes there were also generally one or two other parr hung up on the watch in this backwash; but they were all smaller than our friend; yet, although they took jolly good care to give him room to "swing in the fairway," so to speak, I would not have staked much on their good conduct had they been able to catch our friend in difficulties; for that immutable law of the wild, the survival of the fittest, is even more strictly enforced under the water than in the air or on the land. Sister Mercy and Dame Nature never were on speaking terms, and, it is safe to predict, never will be.

Thus then our parr passed his first Summer.



AUTUMN came, and the forests flamed to red, dulled over, and turned to somber, sullen abodes of silence; and Winter chilled the air, and later the water. Insects vanished, or only

occasionally, in the shape of a Winter gnat or belated moth gave promise of a meal; and our samlet—growing only very slightly all the time—was forced to nose and delve like any common barbel of the river, among the sand and mud for such grubs as he could find.

Hunger came to the stream; and murder, red of jaw, stalked abroad openly by day and night. Samlet ate weaker samlet; and trout ate trout—and samlet too if they got the chance; and the birds, herons, cormorants, divers, wigeon, wild duck, water-hen, and a dozen others, ate all the lot when they could catch them.

Our fish stuck to his chosen hunting-ground, however, by now the largest of a small squadron of lusty survivors, who did not eat each other because they were all too nearly matched to attempt the risk.

Snow drew her shroud over the mountains, and the peaks at dawn and sunset became glories to dream about, but never for mortal men to paint. The stream took on a colder, fresher feel.

And then came the big salmon again, and the reign of terror began.

Our parr, chasing a half-drowned Winter gnat across-stream on the current, became aware of them first in the shape of two great steel-blue "kelts" (as the adult salmon are called) rounding a bend. They hurled themselves after him like unto torpedoes, and he made himself scarce in his boulder refuge with half an inch to spare 'twixt their big hooked jaws and his little forked tail.

They passed on, presumably taking the rapids above in their leap, and next morning the stream was full of salmon—magnificent, silvery monsters from nine to forty pounds in weight, all heading up-stream to spawn.

Our parr waited out in the open water long enough to witness one battle royal between two twenty-pound kippers; dallied long enough to see, though he did not know it, his father, like a battleship among cruisers, towering, enormous and terrifying, plowing his dread way through the crowded ranks on the track of his scarcely smaller mother; a mighty and grand pair of giants, such even as that famous stream had not often in all the eons seen before; dallied long enough, too, to know what it was to see a five-pound trout hunted like a fox, and to know himself a second later how the trout felt when his tiny carcass caught the

eye of a hungry or angry monster and he executed, over, under, round—and it almost looked as if through—the jostling crowd of mighty silver ones, just the nearest approach to mimicking an electric spark run amuck that ever he accomplished in his life.

Then he got to his boulder lair and stayed there. Even his irrepressible, roving, insolent, cruel spirit was awed at last. Other fish, even giant eels and trout and pike, were permissible terrors, but the grown-ups of his own kind—! Well, after all, even if he *was* frightened, it is no small thing to be able to boast that only a salmon can beat a salmon; and he was taking fear from the jaws of the aristocrat of the waters, and not from any “lesser breeds without the law.”

Our samlet, however, cared nothing for the pomp and majesty of the marriage procession of his tribe. His one hope was to get away from the big cannibals as quickly as might be, especially as, thin, wounded, exhausted, unsightly, and in all probability starving for aught he knew, they came dropping down-stream again after a time.

It was like witnessing a finny retreat from Moscow; but our friend did not stay. He fled, and in fleeing ran smack into a second run of smaller salmon coming round a bend. This meeting with his older tribes-folk was worse than the first, because the smaller fish were more agile, and gave him an even more lively time of it; and it was a very tired and worried-looking samlet who toward evening flopped helplessly over a small waterfall some miles below and stayed among the crevices between the big boulders in the pool below to recuperate. One would almost have thought that he had been spawning too.

 SPRING passed and Summer came again. Our samlet stayed on, a little bigger, a trifle less dusky, a wee bit more ferocious for his size, and with, by the same token, a fraction better chance of surviving in the ever hungry river.

There is no record, however, when he left this place—some time in the Autumn probably—but next he turned up many miles down-stream, lurking—with some sign of cleverness, which must have been in the family and one reason why his famous father had survived to grow to such gigantic size—lurking among the branches of a sunken tree, whose trunk was all but silted over.

Now no better spot can be chosen by a

fish than such a one as this. Through the mazes of the weed-hung branches he could precipitate his little body upon the numerous insects and small fish that came to it as a refuge, could chase them in and out at top speed; from here, too, he could dash forth like some glint of light upon his prey drifting down-stream, or to this place he could retreat when hunted, and let his pursuers dash in among the snags and spikes, at the risk of scales and delicate fin-membrane, if they dared. Mostly they did not dare, but passed on sulking, as fish do.

Because the actions of the wild folk be meaningless to us we think them purposeless. This fish was not here by chance. There was—it could be felt once every twelve hours at any rate—a certain smack in the water here different from what it had been up-stream; a hint, a mere suspicion, of salt. One might guess that the last lingering power of the invading sea at high tide just, and only just, reached here. It was so; and our parr or samlet had come here to acclimatize himself, to get, as it were, salted before taking that plunge which among salmon is the equivalent of what we would call “making a man of him.”

At last there came a day when our fish, who had been growing more silvery and restless every day, appeared unable to stand it longer. He swam out from his lair and headed down-stream. He was now about seven inches long and some two years old, and already a good many years older than that in the knowledge of cunningly preserving his own skin at the expense of others.

It was a life-giving day. As he rose to the surface the sun glittered so on the water that one was forced to shut one's eyes. A low, black cloud, with the “rain curtain” beneath, was chasing up one shore of the rapidly widening river, and the woods and copses were dressing themselves in a hazy yellow-green of new life. He could hear a chorus of thrushes giving thanks and praise after rain; and a little wheatear, with winking white rump and new gray-and-black jacket, was flying jerkily over the water away to the northeast.

As he rose our fish made a ripple; and instantly there came all around him a dozen such ripples, and a dozen keen, small, wet, shining heads broke the surface of the water at once.

A white splash glided athwart the sun above, and, turning, hurled down in a series

of diving plunges. Quick it was, that her-ring gull; but our parr was quicker. A flirt of a little tail, a swish, a gleam, and he was gone, leaving the gull to settle and wonder, perhaps, how his cousins the terns manage to plunge under the water so far as the impetus of their fall took them.

Then our parr saw that he was not alone again. A dozen other little fish, from five to six inches long, were darting down with him, all heading one way, all taking absolutely no notice of one another, but all keeping loosely together. Yes, they were young salmon, too; some of them perhaps were brothers and sisters of our friend—all heading down-stream, all traveling steadily, as those who swim upon a journey and have many miles to cover.

On they went, this little party, through the depths, now growing hazy and brown, like a fog, from the mud that the tide brought. From time to time as they moved they caught a fleeting glimpse in the fog of other small silvery shapes, other parr, heading the same way as themselves; from time to time, too, a plunge and breaking-up of the circle of white-gold light above, which marked where the surface was, and the dizzy zigzagging shoot-down of a terrified samlet warned them that their course was being watched by keen eyes from the air above, and that toll of their ranks was being asked and taken. But our fish had really no idea that he was one of an army acting under a single impulse to put the river behind their tails, and that the passage of that army was known; known, if not—and this is more than possible—expected.

The otter came upon them as an express train might come upon a bewildered points-man out of a fog. But she was worse than any express train, for she made no noise in the coming. Indeed, there was no noise down here beneath the surface of the water at all, not so much as a whisper; everything was deadly, grimly, maddeningly silent. That was what made it so terrible. No one said anything at all. Goodness knows what they felt and thought, or whether they felt and thought even.

The otter was moving, kicking out with her powerful hind legs, a train of silver bubbles trailing behind like the tail of a comet—but these bubbles, be it noted, looked silver only from above; from all other aspects they were nearly invisible. She was hungry, and wanted those smolts. She certainly saw

them one instant; **next instant** she beheld a phenomenon as if a group of shooting stars had burst under her nose; and next instant after that, she was alone, threshing through the hazy water, into which the little fish had absconded like magic.

The otter passed on, and the samlets more or less came together again, heading straight down-stream, emotionless as bits of animated metal, and for all the world as if nothing had happened.

A cormorant—a wonderful bird coated in silver sequins if seen from above only—shot upward out of the gloom, as at home under the surface, almost, as the fish themselves. Our parr whizzed straight ahead, as if fired in that instant out of a gun; caught a fractional glimpse of the reptilian green eyes of the bird, staring at him within an inch; may, or probably may not, have heard the snap of the cormorant's beak shut-to half an inch behind his tail; raced, like a mad fish, adown the stream as the great black bird turned with marvelous agility and gave chase; failed utterly, in his hurry, to notice the cormorant turn suddenly aside a hundred yards farther on and vanish, as if alarmed at something, and——!

Our parr stopped so suddenly that it seemed almost as if his tail must have been driven through his head. It was an awful shock; but ordinary shocks, calculated to give most creatures concussion of the brain, do not worry fish.

The parr rebounded as off a spring, spun like a top, shot away, like a fish demented, in the opposite direction, stopped dead and rebounded again, found himself surrounded by a dozen or so other parr, all doing the same thing, and went apparently right "off the handle." For the next few minutes he vanished into a whirling, darting, tearing, dashing, lashing chaos of his fellows.

It was the samlet's first—and he no doubt thought it was going to be his last—experience of a net, and he didn't like it. Wild creatures are so utterly free that if they are checked from going precisely where they want to for half a minute they go clean demented. The unspeakable fear of the trap is born in them all.

Precisely what happened directly after that the fish had no very clear idea. He had a confused notion of being hauled up enclosed in a thing like little matted weeds, and in intolerable confusion, out into a still more intolerable, suffocating glare; of being

seized by a giant creature in a grip that nearly finished him; of being held as in the clutches of an octopus while something or something else was done to him by another giant; of a whirl through that pestilential, choking glare; of hitting the water with a smack, and of racing blindly, madly, feverishly, down the estuary—free again by some miracle that he could not understand.

What had happened was that he, along with others of his kind, had been caught up by order of the Board of Conservancy for that particular river; that is to say, had been netted, and marked with a little gold ring, and then set free again, in the hope of finding out, if possible, whether he would return to his own home river eventually, and how much weight he would gain in the interval, and to what length he would grow, always supposing, of course, that he was ever caught again and the ring recovered.

That night our parr found himself in the open sea; and there he vanished utterly—went out, sauntered into the land of spooks, and was no more, swallowed up in the dim, great, mysterious ocean, whose realms are, even to this day, largely a closed book.



TWO and a half years later, on one of those beautiful evenings of rose and purple fragrant balm which July sometimes gives us, a big gull, heading homeward across the mouth of that very estuary down which the parr had passed on his way to the sea, flung up suddenly, and came round on a long, lazy curve. His quick eyes—almost the quickest eyes in the British wild—had seen the surface of the sea freckle over and boil white in one spot. No gull needs to be told the signs of a rising fish shoal, and this one was over the spot in quick time.

A pause followed; and then, a little way away, the jade-green wavelets seethed and foamed to whiteness in one patch, and a thousand mackerel, flashing, beautiful beyond description, in a living, leaping pool of mother-of-pearl, shot hissing along the surface.

Something, some terror of the deep, had driven them there. The gull must have known that, too; the wild, desperate dash proved it to him, but he did not take any notice then. He shortened his wings and dived down in a series of darts. Here indeed was a meal of meals for any who was

quick enough to take it, and the next instant he wished he had not tried.

Suddenly, desperately, with a scream of fear, he flung out his long wings; madly he backed air; in pure terror he kicked with his webbed feet at the water, as, without any kind of warning at all, open-jawed and terrifying, there shot up, cleaving the shoal asunder like blown leaves, the smooth, steel-blue, torpedo-shaped, raking form of a lordly salmon.

It was too late for the gull to do anything. He barged fairly on to the back of the apparition before he could stop. Quick as thought the salmon bent on himself like a spring; there was a clash of teeth, a fountain of spray, and—salmon, mackerel and all were gone, and a considerably more than merely startled gull was rising from the sea with strenuous wing-beats that fairly whistled in the still air.

That grand fish was our one-time little parr, returning to his home river for the first time, after years of roving adventure in the sea.

Dusk was settling down upon the river; and the magic, lingering sadness and stillness of dusk was in the air. The fisherman standing on an outcrop of rock turned and looked away over the fields to where a thin blue trail of smoke curled up lazily against the background of banked trees. Then he glanced down-stream to where the waters and mud of the estuary lay like a sheet of bronze in the setting sun. He had been up since dawn. He yawned.

"Just one more cast," said he, "and then I'll go."

The gaudy artificial fly sailed across the pool lightly as a gnat, alighted gently, almost coaxingly, on the still, glassy water, and—! A swirl, a boil, a leap as if a bar of silver had been flung up; and the salmon—our slamon—was away with the bait.

Then he fought.

He shot, he streaked, he squeezed between impossible places, he sulked, he skipped, he scooted, he dashed, he doubled, he danced nearly on end, he darted this way and that, he dived and nosed the bottom and the stones, trying vainly to rub off the intolerable thing that pulled and held him by the lip; he twisted, he turned, he twirled, he threshed the surface into foam, he leaped full six feet, he lay still, and he lashed with his tail at the line; he came in, pretending to be done, only to spring against the butt;

he circled hugely, he cavorted madly, he charged down-stream like an escaped torpedo, he churned the shallows to whipped soda and milk; and at last, fighting still like ten demons, after thirty-nine minutes' furious battle, he was, inch by hard-fought inch, drawn in and, in the arms of a gillie, respectfully landed.

Then after one long stare; the fisherman whistled, and quoth he:

"A marked salmon, by Jove! See the gold ring. He must go back. Measure him quick, and weigh."

He was going to put our salmon back, that man; he said so. He was going to put him back for the honor of the fish he had caught that day; especially for the honor of one, a monster of fifty pounds' weight and unknown years, who was, though neither man nor fish knew it, the father of our salmon. So his father died to save him; but he would rather have lived.

Nine and three-quarter pounds was the weight of our salmon, thirty-one and a quarter inches was his length, and thirteen and a half inches was his girth; and the age, as we

know, was precisely four and a half years. Therefore he had not wasted time, nor grown slowly while in the sea, whatever he had done in the river before.

Then with a heave and a splash they flung him back to the water, his home, and he turned for the second time to the salt ocean, and went, passing on his way dozens of salmon heading up the estuary to the river to breed. He himself, however, did not return to breed till he was five and a half years old, whatever he may have meant to do before he was hooked.

That was long ago, and our salmon was never caught again; but to this day, if you watch, if you wait by the spawning-ground, if you have patience and Heaven reward you with luck, you will surely sooner or later catch a glimpse, just one glimpse, of the mammoth Silver King, the salmon, the pride and glory of that river, who, men say, would drag the heart out of the scale at sixty pounds, and you will remember him as a friend of yours whom you have known up from babyhood — our own salmon.



Obeah

by T.S. Stribling



Author of "The Servant of Peter Illington," "Fombombo," etc.

FOR any two human beings to agree upon any point at any time is either a compromise, a bungle in definition or a miracle. This position could be proved a priori thus: All persons receive from the same object diverse sensory impressions; these impressions are translated into ideas through highly individual mental associations and are warped by different hopes and desires. To put the capstone on Chaos, the world itself gives one the impression of being a sort of manifold; a series of entirely different worlds superimposed one upon and into the other so that a man may choose what he will. It is a kind of cosmic politician, leering at us, promising all things to all men and in the end—in the end—

 **MR. JAMES SPINGARN**, a checker in the pitch-barreling works on the Pitch Lake in Trinidad, was of a scientific turn. Nature never deceived Mr. Spingarn, because if she attempted any such tricks Mr. Spingarn immediately got behind her and, as you might say, straightened her out. Mr. Spingarn was youngish; in fact, youthful.

The Pitch Lake of Trinidad happens to be one of the hottest places on the surface of the earth, and on this particular day heat had so stupefied Spingarn's wits that he hardly knew which barrel he was checking in the endless procession of barrels which a line of half-naked negroes rolled past him out to the platform. He clicked the little

automatic counter in his hand while a medley of vague thoughts floated through his head.

At some point in his musing a voice behind Spingarn asked how many barrels he had sent down to the schooner at the pier.

Jimmy glanced around and saw Pennington, the billing clerk. He lifted his little automatic checking-machine and read the numbers in the slot.

"Then she wants fifty more," said Pennington.

The checker nodded and blinked the sweat out of his eyes.

Pennington did not immediately turn back to the office. No one in the tropics does anything immediately. Instead he stood staring down through the unwallied sides of the building, down the hill at a huge lake which lay below them as black as the pit.

Here and there on the wide black lake a few clumps of vegetation made shrill green spots. Along the jet surface lay four car tracks which connected at the bottom of the hill and ran up to the plant in a main line. Out on the lake, along these tracks, worked a gang of negroes, digging out pitch and loading it into the little cable cars.

At this distance the negroes looked like little polished ebony figures; all were stripped to the waist, and the intense sunshine glistened on their sweating bodies.

Pennington began talking about billiards. He said he had made a run of sixty the

evening before. Spingarn said he supposed Pennington's nerves had been a little better coordinated than usual. Pennington said no, that it was his will. He had willed with all his power to— Spingarn interrupted him to observe that after all Pennington's will was a mere status of his nerves. Why should Pennington have willed particularly strongly that evening? Something had caused it. It was like a chemical reaction—

The billing clerk yawned. He had learned never to argue with Spingarn. He puckered his eyes against the outside brilliance and stared at something on the lake; then he asked indifferently—

"Wonder what's the matter with them niggers?"

Spingarn dropped his thesis with regret. He peered down and saw the small, polished black figures throwing down their picks and scrambling out of the pits they had dug. They walked rapidly or even ran toward the shore looking back over their shoulders after the fashion of scared negroes.

"Something's gone wrong," said the checker.

Then after a moment's consideration—

"Perhaps we'd better ride down and see?"

The billing clerk agreed. Spingarn beckoned one of the negroes in the procession rolling barrels. When the black came up, he said:

"Blue Gum, I want you to count for me. I want you to count just as many barrels as goes two times around both hands and then to your middle finger. See? This one—" he touched Blue Gum's rusty finger—"twice around and to this finger, then stop 'em."

"Yes, *buckra*,"* grunted Blue Gum, and began checking barrels by turning down a finger for every one that rolled past.

The two white men went outside to the elevated car track, vaulted into the first empty that went down and then stood holding to the side of the car with handkerchiefs to prevent the iron binding from burning their hands in the sunshine. They roared down, and a half-minute later got out at the edge of the lake where the workmen stood.

All the negroes were mighty fellows with shining black muscles that swelled and contracted at the faintest movement of

their hands. But with all their physical hugeness they kept walling white eyes at the lake and somehow reminded Jimmy of the unreasoning terror of horses at the fluttering of a leaf.

Among the crowd stood two or three skeleton-like Hindus who greased the tracks and switched the cars to their proper spurs. These coolies were as weak as the negroes were powerful and even more nearly naked. Two twists of muslin, one around head, another around loins, and these cadaverous men were clad.

They were not frightened as were the negroes. They seemed to be absolutely without interest in the world at large or in each other. They simply stood while the negroes chattered away in their broad West Indian dialect, dragging out their vowels to a great length.

"Ma-a-an, I wouldn't go back the-e-ere for no-o-body's money."

"No-o-c, boss, I got as much sense as a crow. Show a crow a gu-u-u-n, an' he fly-y-y away."

"What in the world are you negroes talking about?" asked Jimmy.

Came a pause in their gabbling; then a negro called Daaga rumbled out of a forty-eight-inch chest—

"Da-aid man out the-ere, boss."

A sharp concern came over Spingarn. He looked out over the black lake.

"Where? Did one of you black boys get hurt or killed?"

"No-o, *buckra*, but we gwi-i git hurt if we stay aroun' here."

Another black walled his eyes.

"Da-aid man reachin' his han' up tro-o-o de pitch to ketch one of us niggahs, boss."

"What are you talking about?" cried Pennington, quickly losing his patience with these overgrown children. "A dead man trying to catch you— What the thunder——"

"Sho is, boss."

"Dat's right, *buckra*."

"Right ovah the-ere, white man; dat middle track."

All the negroes were pointing now. But the huge Daaga, who had a peaked, woolly head, features grotesquely gross and red streaks in the yellowish whites of his eyes, grunted out:

"Bettah keep away frum the-e-ere, *buckra*, dat's '*obeah*.'* He gwi bring you

* *Buckra* means white man. It is an African word imported into the West Indies.

* *Obeah*, a sort of devil worship introduced into the West Indies by the slaves from Africa.

har-arr, *buckra*, ef you look at him."

Neither white man paid any attention to this warning but walked out to the pit where the negroes had been digging.

A single glance showed them what had put the diggers to flight. Out of the bottom of the pit protruded what appeared to be a gigantic black hand. It did look rather ghastly reaching up out of the black lake into the intense sunshine.

"What is it?" asked Pennington curiously.

A chorus from the negroes who followed the boys at a distance answered the billing clerk.

"Dat's *obeah*, boss! Obeah, reachin' up his bla-a-ack han' trying to drag somebody down to mek him wu'k down the-e-ere."

But Spingarn dropped down into the pit and bent over the object. It looked like a bony hand with the little finger very much larger than the rest. In fact it was so long that it reached on out and reentered the pitch again and was lost in the bottom of the pit.

As Jimmy studied the queer thing in the hot pit, the great joy of discovering a rare and a curious fossil broke suddenly on him. The shape of this buried hand was so very extraordinary that the slightest acquaintance with the structure of early animals would serve to identify it. In a moment the checker knew precisely what he had found. He leaped erect and waved an arm.

"I know what it is!" he cried in triumph. "I know! Pen, we're made!"

The negroes backed away *en masse* from this, shouting:

"Good Lawd, *buckra*, don' be yellin' lak dat. I sho-o' thought dat thing had you!"

"Dat thing will git you, white ma-a-n; come out o' the-ere while you still is lo-o-ose!"

"What is it?" asked the billing clerk excitedly.

"It's a pterodactyl."

Came a pause that extended from the billing clerk even to the negroes, who came a little closer.

"A wh-a-a-a-at?"

Spingarn gave an excited laugh and thought he would make his description terrific.

"It was a great, big, black, flying dragon that flew around by waving its little finger—a pterodactyl."

At this ghastly explanation the black men

went tumbling away from the pit with shouts and moans. Even Pennington looked rather queerly into the pit.

"Flew with its little finger! Say, there's no use scaring these niggers like that."

He turned to the diggers.

"Say, you fellows, suppose you go to work on one of these other lines of track."

"No-o-o suh, boss, not as long as dat devil what fly wid his fi-i-ingah is about to git out."

"Why, this animal died fifty thousand years ago," laughed Jimmy. "It can't hurt you."

"No; we kno-o-ows he cain't, ef we don' git clo-o-ose to him."

"But you can work further up the track," put in Pennington seriously.

"No-o-o suh, not wid dat pit open, *buckra*."

The workers rolled their black heads in complete obstinacy.

Pennington looked a little uncertainly at Jimmy.

"We're wasting time," he said significantly.

"What do you mean?" asked Spingarn.

"Why—it looks like we're going to have to close it up."

The checker stared as if Pennington had suggested they close the road to heaven. He vaulted out of the pit and stared about him.

"Close it up! Close it up!" he cried. "Why, what a suggestion! Don't you know that this find—" he shook his finger down into the pit—"is worth more than all the pitch they will ever dig out of here. It's more valuable than gold; it's—it's information; it's a new bit of knowledge added to our human store. Here, you black men," he cried, "come on and dig this out. I tell you you'll be doing something men will bless you for."

The checker made his appeal with genuine passion, and passion is always eloquent. Of all people negroes are the most powerfully moved by eloquence. Jimmy picked out one special negro and pointed at him.

"Come on, Gizzard, and help me do this thing!"

Gizzard hesitated.

"Well, now, look heah, *buckra*; if you is right sho-o-o-o'—"

At this juncture all the negroes might have dribbled back to work again; but Daaga cried out—

"What you fool niggahs thinkin' 'bout di-i-ggin' up a great big bla-a-ack thing what flies wid its fingah!"

And Gizzard backed away like a colt from a rag.

"No suh, boss— Fly wid his fi-i-ingah— No-o suh; not me, boss."

"Will you work for twenty cents an hour?" cried Jimmy in desperation.

The diggers walled their eyes around at Daaga, who shook his head; and then they shook their heads.

"Great guns, such imbeciles!" cried Spingarn, looking helplessly at his friend.

"We'll have to close it up," repeated Pennington.

"No! No, we won't close it up!"

Jimmy looked about in frustration, as if he were seeking help from the silent, sun-baked hills which had kept the fossil of the pterodactyl through these thousands and thousands of years.

"I'm going to send this thing to the Smithsonian Museum at Washington," he announced wrathfully, "or I'll die trying."

"Dat's *obeah*, boss," rumbled Daaga warningly.

"*Obeah*, the devil!"

"Yes suh, *buckra*; *obeah*, the devil."

"Before I'll let it go I'll dig it out myself first. I'll——"

Here his eyes fell on the coolies, who had remained motionless on the bank of the pitch lake and exhibited not the faintest interest in the negroes or the white men or the monster they had found. Jimmy held out his arm to them.

"Hey there, Abderath, Ouranie, Boodman! Will you fellows help me to dig up this thing I've found in the lake at fifteen cents an hour?"

The corpse-like figure of Abderath came forward in his breech-clout, followed by the other two coolies.

The huge negroes stared angrily at these puny usurpers.

"Look heah, Abderath, Ouranie!" growled the mighty Daaga. "What you mean, you fool coolies, diggin' up something what's gwinter fly-y-y around wid its fingah!"

Abderath turned his black, skull-like face toward the negro.

"Jest bones, Daaga."

"You'll be bones, too, you fool coolie, like you nearly is now. Dat's *obeah* you diggin' up."

"No 'fraid *obeah*."

A queer expression came over Daaga's grotesque face.

"Oh, you ain't afraid of *obeah*, ain't you, you po-o-o' heathen coolie what don't nevah read de Bible! Well, you jess dig ahead in dat pit an' you see what *obeah* does to you, an' it sho-o-o' will be a plenty, you dried-up lizard of a man!"

The coolies, however, paid no attention to this, but came forward with the peculiar gliding walk of their race, picked up the tools the negroes had thrown down, climbed down into the pit and set feebly to work.

Spingarn stood in the furnace of sunshine, delighted with every stroke the Hindus took. Pennington looked questioningly at this new arrangement. He came and touched his friend's arm.

"Look here, Spingarn," he said. "We'd better get back up to the plant, I think, and—er—how are you ever going to make it straight with Henderson—changing off from negroes to coolies?"

Jimmy turned away from watching his wonderful fossil come to light under the picks of the Hindus. He had been so focused on saving the bones that he really had not thought about the labor end of the change.

He walked back to the switch at the margin of the lake, got in a car along with Pennington, gave the signal and a little later went rattling up the hill to the plant again. As he went, Spingarn began composing a little speech which he meant to say to Henderson, the superintendent of the Pitch Lake, showing him how important it was to get out the fossil, and how it would be well worth the company's time to spend a few days getting it excavated.



WHEN Jimmy Spingarn got back to the barreling-plant he found that Blue Gum had missed count on his fingers and had sent sixty-three extra barrels of pitch to the schooner at the pier. No doubt what had really happened was that Blue Gum went to sleep and allowed the extra sixty-three barrels to roll past him uncounted; then no doubt he had waked and had picked up his addition on the finger where he left off. At any rate as the negroes came toiling back with the barrels they complained bitterly of this unjust work.

Jimmy at once set off to find Blue Gum and give him a raking over the coals. He

had to hunt for some time before he found Blue Gum, about half-way down to the pier in the shade of a shed, looking gloomily at the barrels he had sent wrong. He jumped when he saw Jimmy.

The checking-clerk started in on him at once.

"Look here, Blue Gum, you long-headed, sleepy fool, why didn't you tot up those barrels right! Why didn't you stop where I told you to stop!"

Blue Gum was all puffed up and surly.

"I did stop," he grumbled, "jest 'zactly where you said."

"Went twice around both hands to your middle finger?"

"Yes suh; dat's 'zac'ly whut I done."

"Then how in thunder did you ship down sixty-three barrels too many?"

Blue Gum looked at his hands gloomily.

"Ma-a-an is liable to have mo' fingahs at one time dan anodder."

The checker was outraged.

"What! What! You chuckleheaded idiot! You are likely to have more fingers at one time than another!"

"Sho', sho', boss; and I ain't gwine ter stay where any sich things is carryin' on."

"You big dub, your fingers didn't change; you went to sleep."

"No suh; muh fingahs sho' did change, buckra!"

"But that's impossible!"

"'Tain't no mo' impossible dan fuh you to dig up something out in de lake what can fly aroun' wid its fingahs. No suh; an' I 'spec' dat debbil you dug up out in de lake is whut changed my fingahs."

Blue Gum looked at his hand curiously.

The checker was disgusted.

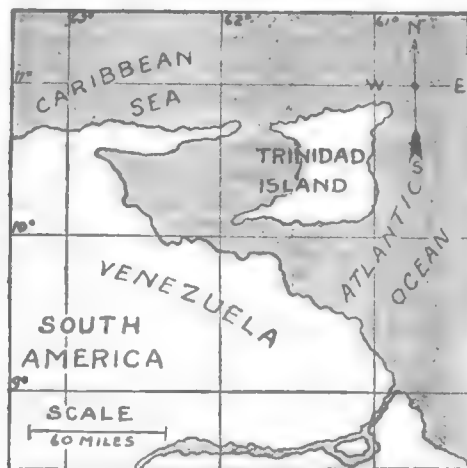
"You've been talking to Daaga," he snapped, and left the negro.

At six o'clock the whistle blew, and the groaning barreling-plant came to silence. Jimmy Spingarn went walking back down toward the sea to the dormitory where all the single men of the company lived. Along the way were the cottages of the married officials—very pretty American cottages; for Brighton, in the southern part of Trinidad, is an American concern. It is the prettiest town of the whole island, with asphalt streets taken straight from the lake, a pier and a bathing-beach.

The dormitory where Jimmy lived was a huge structure with two great wings of rooms and a central social hall and dining-

room. Its enormous verandas were completely screened in. Jimmy walked down toward this building still thinking what he would tell Henderson. He was sorry Blue Gum had made a snarl counting the barrels, for that would put Henderson out of humor and make his task more difficult. He could very easily have stopped by Henderson's house and have seen the superintendent as he walked home, but he did not do it. He went to his room moodily enough, and then after supper went down to the beach for a swim before he went to bed.

It was quite dark when Jimmy reached the waterside, and all the white population were on the sand. There was much laughter as children and men and women chased out after the waves and finally tripped and tumbled into them. Beyond the bathers the illuminated pier reached a long, shining finger out into the sea.



Spingarn took his swim a little farther up the beach than the crowd did, and he came out and sat on the sand in rather a retired spot. And a queer thought came to him. He wondered if he were actually trying to avoid meeting Henderson? Well—he didn't exactly want to see the superintendent until he had thought up all he wanted to say, a sort of speech to save the fossil of the pterodactyl; for if Henderson should decree that the fossil be reburied—a little quiver of dismay went through Spingarn's scientific brain—that would be awful! And likely as not Blue Gum's silly bungling of the barrels would lose him his whole argument.

Right in the midst of these unhappy thoughts Spingarn heard a soft crunching of the sand behind him. He looked around and was rather taken aback to see Henderson in his bathing-suit.

The superintendent was a tall, bony man with wide shoulders and a long, brown, satiric face. Somehow, now in his bathing-suit, he reminded Jimmy of a horse.

They said good evening to each other, and the superintendent dropped down on the sand and sat looking at the lighted pier. He began piling the sand into little mounds, and finally asked briefly—

"Did you know ten of our diggers asked for their pay this afternoon?"

"No," said Jimmy, rather shocked. "Did they?"

"I believe you can accept my statement as true," said Henderson dryly.

"Oh, certainly, sir."

"What I didn't understand," said Henderson, "was the tale they are telling about you. You were going to dig up a man who could fly with his fingers. What sort of fool trick are you trying on these niggers anyway?"

Jimmy turned warm. This was not at all the way he had wanted to deliver his address to Henderson, but there was nothing for him to do but to begin. He hesitated a moment, cleared his throat and then—

"Well, the fact is, sir, that today we found a pterodactyl out in the pitch——"

Henderson looked around at him.

"A wha-at?"

Jimmy was shocked to see that Henderson knew no more about it than did the negroes.

"A pterodactyl. It's a monster that flew with its fingers."

"You told the niggers that?"

"Yes, sir."

The superintendent laughed shortly.

"No wonder you scared the life out of them. Why, they expect it to fly away with them the minute it gets out of the pit!"

"They were pretty scared," admitted Jimmy.

"Didn't they want to fill the hole up?"

"Y-e-es—I believe they did."

The superintendent began making marks in the sand and finally observed:

"They find a fossil in the lake every once in a while, and they always want to bury it again. I let 'em."

Spingarn stared at the superintendent amazed.

"What? You don't mean it, Mr. Henderson."

"The scientific sacrilege of the thing grew on him."

"Why, great Scotts, man, you may be burying the most important scientific data the world holds! There are only two or three such lakes as this in the world. They are the storehouses of information regarding the earth's past; and now for you deliberately to throw away these records!"

Jimmy's tone was more caustic than his words. The older man sat a few moments longer and then said dryly—

"That's all fine talk; but I'm put here to make dividends for my company, not to dig up fossils for high-brows."

"High-brows! High-brows!" snapped the checker. "You call em high-brows, do you; men who work and study all their lives to add a little something to everybody's knowledge, so that everybody will be a little more rational and a little better informed!"

Henderson wagged a finger at the checker.

"I know that patter," he said. "It comes usually from a man who has failed to make money."

Somehow everything Henderson said irritated Jimmy more and more. He was on the verge of berating all money-grubbers when at that moment came a calling of Mr. Henderson's name down the beach. The two companions became quiet at once.

"Shout out and tell them I'm here," said the superintendent.

Spingarn stood up and called. Pretty soon figures of men in bathing-suits came running up the dark beach. They slowed up when they saw the tall form of the superintendent coming toward them.

"A nigger that works in the power plant has just got a shock, Henderson. The niggers are all quitting up there. They say the place is hoodooed."

The superintendent made a sharp gesture.

"Confound it, I half-believe it myself. My hands are quitting; my barrels of pitch count out wrong; here an electrician is knocked out."

He went hurrying along in his bathing-suit and turned up the asphalt walk that leads from the pier to the barreling-plant.

Spingarn hurried along with the men. He had an uncomfortable feeling that

somehow he was responsible for all these misfortunes. It pressed on his thoughts so that he was driven to speak of it. He moistened his lips as the group of men strode along up the pitch walk.

"Er—uh—you don't think that—er—fossil had anything to do with this, Mr. Henderson?"

"The —— I don't! That's exactly what did it."

"But, Mr. Henderson, how on earth——"

"Because every nigger in the works knows there is a skeleton in the pitch. They are nervous, expecting something to happen; and when men get like that something is going to happen, and happen quick!"

"Yes, sir. I meant—er—supernatural, you know——"

"Don't be a fool!" snapped the superintendent.

"Er—yes, sir; right you are, sir."

And Jimmy deserted the rescuing party to return to the dormitory.

JIMMY SPINGARN moved toward his sleeping-place sharply disgusted with himself at the bungling way he had managed his case. Instead of putting up a convincing plea he had actually lost his temper and irritated the superintendent. But he always hated to hear anybody call scientists "high-brows." It seemed to Jimmy that the scientists were the most necessary human beings in the whole world; and then to hear some half-way informed fellow call them "high-brows!" Why, Henderson didn't even know what a pterodactyl was——

The checker was about to enter the dormitory when a thin figure appeared in the gloom and called his name in the pinched voice of a coolie. He looked around and recognized the man.

"What is it, Abderath?" he inquired, thinking the coolie had come for his pay for digging.

The Hindu hesitated.

"Sahib Jim, me come tell——"

"Sure; cut loose and tell it."

"Me no dig tomor'."

"I have an idea you won't, either," said Jimmy, thinking of the superintendent; "but what's your reason?"

"Me get snake tonight, *sahib*, no dig tomor'."

"You've got a *snake*!"

"Look."

Abderath reached in the fold of his loin-cloth, drew out something that rustled and extended it toward the American.

Spingarn did not take it but moved back a step. A thought flickered through Jimmy's brain that Abderath had quit work to become a Hindu snake-charmer.

"What the deuce is it?"

"Nigger call he *obeah*."

"Just step in here to the light, will you?"

The checker held open the screen door of the piazza, and the coolie stepped inside, still holding whatever it was that had frightened him into giving up his job. The two went under an electric light, and the American saw what the Hindu had—a bundle of sticks and leaves tied around a small, dried snake. Jimmy stared rather blankly at the repulsive thing.

"Where did you get it?"

"Found he in bed tonight."

"Your bed?"

The coolie nodded.

The conversation on the piazza brought three or four boys to see what the matter was. Pennington came out, chalking his billiard cue. A young creole man—or, that is to say, one born in Trinidad of English parents—was in the group. Spingarn pointed to the bundle in the coolie's hands and asked what it was. The creole, whose name was Gunther, answered at once—

"That's an *obeah*."

"What's it for?"

"Where did you find it?" asked Gunther of Abderath.

"In bed, *sahib*."

"I see," said Gunther.

"The niggers put it in there to scare you, Abderath," said Pennington. "They are trying to make you quit your job on the Pitch Lake."

"It's a charm, a bad charm," said Gunther. "It's a part of the devil worship brought here from Africa by the slaves. When the niggers put this near anybody's premises it brings 'em bad luck. If they put it in your bed, Abderath, I fancy it'll kill you."

"Oh, the idea!" laughed Spingarn. "But it is interesting anyway. Do they make many of 'em? Could a fellow get a collection of them?"

Gunther threw up his hands.

"For the love of Mike—what do you want with a collection of those putrid things?"

"Why, to study comparative superstitions," declared Spingarn with warmth. "Suppose you had the charms of a lot of primitive folks, say the Hopi Indians, the Eskimo, the Tasmanians; it would be interesting to see how the human mind works in its early stages."

"Listen to the high-brow," said one of the men.

"Well, it would be!" defended Jimmy. "All human minds come up through about the same stages. If you'd trace your ancestors back far enough, Bivens, you'd find some old codger squatting around making a charm similar to this."

"Aw, shaw now," said Bivens, rather taken aback that any of his forefathers should ever have been a maker of charms.

"Sure; all human beings have traveled the same road; that's what makes these things interesting."

He turned to the coolie.

"Now look here, Abderath, I want this thing you've got. Give you fifty cents for it. You and the other coolies dig ahead tomorrow—that is if you get a chance—and get the niggers to put more of them in your bed, and I'll buy them up."

The group of white men began laughing.

"Say, isn't he a nut!"

But Abderath was impressed.

"Me dig, *sahib*," he grunted.

"Sure thing. Get some more of these and I'll take 'em off your hands. And remember there is no more harm in a bundle of sticks than a bag of rice and curry."

Abderath delivered the *obeah* and made a ceremonial bow with his hands crossed over his skeleton chest.

"Me dig; me go now."

"All right; good night, and bring me some more if you can."

The group of smiling men watched the cadaverous figure pass out of the door into the night. Jimmy turned to his room with his newest prize. Gunther followed him. When the men on the porch had scattered back to their games Gunther said in a low voice—

"Spingarn, I wouldn't keep that dirty thing in my room."

"I'll put it in a box out of the way."

"It'll smell your room up."

The checker looked at it as they passed under another porch light.

"The snake seems perfectly dry."

"Yes, it is dry!" said Gunther sharply.

"And do you know how it was dried? Over a fire of dried calabashes with cat-hair thrown on it."

Jimmy looked at his friend, rather surprised at his vehemence.

"Well—that's interesting; but what of it?"

Gunther said nothing but simply swallowed. They had reached Jimmy's room by now. The two entered, and the checker switched on the light. The creole sat down on the bed and watched the checker open the drawer of a cabinet and store away his curio.

"Spingarn!" he exclaimed suddenly. "I wouldn't keep that thing in my room for a hundred dollars a night."

Gunther's face was white, and he was moistening his dry lips with his tongue.

Jimmy stared at him with amazement dawning in his eyes.

"Do *you* believe in this absurd thing, Gunther?"

The creole cleared his throat and wet his lips again.

"Well, now listen here—er—my daddy had a cacao estate up north of Port au Spain. Some of his nigger hands got mad at him one day and put one of those confounded things under his doorstep—just under his doorstep, mind you; not in the room where he lived; they didn't want to hurt him that bad; just under his doorstep——"

Spingarn began to laugh against his will.

"Gunther, what in the world are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about these devilish *obeahs*!" cried Gunther. "The next day my daddy had the worst attack of rheumatism in his knee he ever had!"

"Well I'm blessed, Gunther. That had nothing to do with his rheumatism!"

"Thunder it didn't! We knew right off there was an *obeah* around. We made a hunt for it and found it under his doorstep. Took it out and burnt it, and dad was all right next day."

The checker stared at his friend and then suddenly began to laugh. Once started he couldn't stop, but roared till his eyes filled with tears and he was gasping:

"A — a — white boy — believing in a—t-trace of old primitive d-devil-worship b-brought over from Af-Af-Africa! Oh, Gunter, that's killing!"

He got out his handkerchief to wipe his eyes.

"Yes, it is killing!" cried Gunther, thoroughly incensed. "And you'll be the guy that's killed. And that thing'll do it!"

He pointed at the chest.

"You think you are so confoundedly smart!" he cried. "It'll show you! You'll see!"

He got up from the bed and moved angrily toward the door.

Jimmy was sorry instantly.

"Wait! Hold on, Gunther! I say, old top, I didn't mean——"

But the creole slammed the door, and Spingarn could hear him stalking away down the long piazza.

The American sat seriously enough now that he had offended his friend. That at least was one stroke of bad luck the *obeah* had brought him. He went to a series of scientific books which he had on a shelf and took down one containing an account of pterodactyls. He read a little, but his thoughts strayed off to Henderson, to the negro who was shocked in the power house, to the striking diggers and to Gunther. In fact Spingarn had found serious reading always difficult in the tropics.

It suddenly struck the checker as probable that Gunther had never read a scientific book in all his life. Instead of that he had heard tales from the superstitious negroes and had imbibed them.

"I daresay I wasn't exactly charitable with Gunther," thought Spingarn, and he yawned.

Presently he undressed; switched out his light and went to bed. For some minutes more his thoughts moved sleepily among the events of the day, and then he knew no more.

How long he slept he could not guess, but at some hour of the night he was awakened by a noise in his room. A certain apprehension trickled along the boy's nerves as he started awake. He gasped, raised up on his elbow and called:

"Hey! Hey! What's the matter?"

At that moment a light was switched on, and he saw Gunther in his pajamas. Gunther was looking anxiously at the checker.

"Are you all right, Spingarn?"

The checker blinked in the light.

"Y-Yes—why?"

"I thought there was something the matter with you. I thought I heard you cry out."

"Why, no; I'm all right—you must have dreamed it."

"Maybe I did."

The two young fellows stretched their eyes; then Spingarn said:

"Gunther, you must excuse me for yipping like I did tonight. It was rotten indecent of me."

"Oh, that's all right, Spin; you—you haven't had any experience with *obeah*, and I have."

Spingarn bit his lip to resist smiling again.

The creole was deadly serious.

"Now when anything happens, Spingarn, don't hesitate to call me. If you can't speak, rap with your knuckles on the wall."

"Good Lord!" said Spingarn. "What do you think is going to happen?"

"I don't know."

With that Gunther switched out the light again and went back to his room.



NEXT morning Jimmy Spingarn awoke with a feeling that he had some urgent duty to perform, and when he collected himself he remembered the fossil and began thinking how he could save it. He turned out of his bed, rushed through his shower-bath, got his clothes, then hurried out into the morning.

He felt he ought to go talk to the superintendent again and make amends for getting irritated on the beach, so he set out among the pretty cottages and reached Henderson's house. The chairs on the veranda were turned to the wall, and all the blinds were down.

Since no one was out of bed, Jimmy thought he would walk on up to the barreling-plant. As he passed through the enormous shed he decided he would go down and look at the skeleton again.

The jet-black lake looked very strange and beautiful under the purple shadows of morning. Its black surface still shimmered with heat, although the air on top of the knoll was pleasantly cool. As Spingarn walked down to the lake he felt as if he were lowering himself into some tepid bath. A little later he reached the lake and walked out on the surface to the pit.

His first glance inside sent a thrill of dismay through the checker. He could hardly believe his eyes. The pit was empty. The skeleton was gone.

As the checker stared into the empty

pit he at once suspected that the negroes had done away with the fossil during the night. An impulse to run back up the hill and make a search for the marauders tingled through Jimmy's legs, but at that moment he happened to observe a little dimple in the pitch at the bottom of the pit. He looked at it, grew curious, then climbed down and examined it. He saw a glint of the bone in the bottom of the dimple.

Then he understood what had happened. The pitch in the Pitch Lake is continually oozing up from below. Every night pits dug on the preceding day fill to the height of about six inches. This rising pitch had covered up the skeleton.

Such a relief came to Spingarn that he sat down in the pit with the shaken feeling of a person who has escaped a great calamity. He did not know himself that he was so bent on preserving the pterodactyl. He touched the bone in the crevice to reassure himself that it was indeed there, and then climbed out and started back to the dormitory for breakfast.

As he went back he saw Henderson on his front porch reading the morning paper. Jimmy decided that he would begin his talk and make it a little more politic this time, so he told about thinking the negroes had stolen the skeleton from the pit.

The superintendent smiled dryly.

"Thought the negroes did it! Don't you know you couldn't have hired a negro to go there last night with all the gold in the treasury? I'm afraid, Spingarn, you are one of these dreamy, theoretical, scientific fellows who overlook what is simple and obvious and right under your nose."

"Hm, yessir," said Jimmy, reddening; and as he could think of nothing more to say after that, he went on down to the dormitory.

He was annoyed at himself because he had left an opening for the superintendent to make fun of him. He became perfectly sure now that Henderson meant to cover the fossil up, and that would end the whole thing.

A foolish thought flashed through his mind that this was the bad luck the *obeah* had brought him. Then he put this notion sharply out of his head.

"I won't be a fool like Gunther," he thought and hurried on down to the dormitory to his breakfast.

Half an hour later, at the blast of the

whistle, he climbed back up the hill again and went to his post in the barreling-plant.

When Jimmy Spingarn reached his place of work he was surprised to see Pennington, the office man, at his desk checking up the cars that dumped their pitch into the steam vat.

The American came up and looked questioningly at the billing clerk.

"I got your job," said Pennington with a sort of smile.

"Yes—I see you have."

"Henderson sent me here. He told me to tell you to report at the office."

Spingarn looked at his friend uncomfortably.

"Do you suppose he is—er—going to fire me?"

"What for?"

"Raising all this disturbance over those bones?"

"Great guns, man, he can't blame *you* because the niggers found some bones!"

"Yes; but you know I put Abderath to digging, and that's what made the niggers quit work and get nervous."

"Well, they had quit anyway, you know that; you naturally put in anybody who would work. Besides, old Henderson has taken a leaf out of your book and has replaced all his niggers with Hindus. Look for yourself," and Pennington pointed toward the lake.

Jimmy looked and to his surprise saw there was not a negro left on the lake. Every nigger was a coolie with a bit of cheese-cloth wrapped around his loins. The boy's heart fell. He had caused all that, and he knew it.

"Heavens, Penn! I'm gone," he gasped. "You know he's going to fire me."

"I shouldn't be surprised," admitted Pennington. "I don't see what you stirred up such a stink about a lot of bones for anyway; struck me as being the biggest fool trick I ever saw you pull."

The checker was too low spirited to defend even his beloved fossil.

"Uh-huh; still—I wish I could have got 'em out before I got the sack."

"Why? What are you so crazy about 'em for?" cried the billing clerk. "Absolutely, Jimmy, you've got a screw loose on that subject."

Jimmy's spirits mounted at this charge. "No, I haven't! I don't care what you

think, fossils *are* important! They are the few untorn pages in the world's history. Anybody who is not an absolute bonehead is bound to be interested in the world he is living on. That's the difference between a man and a beast. A beast just knows his present. He is pegged down to the very hour he is living in. But a man sees as far back as history reaches. A fossil such as the one in the pit opens up such enormous reaches of time it absolutely makes you dizzy."

Pennington looked at his friend curiously.

"Why don't you tell Henderson that when he starts to fire you?"

Jimmy drew a long face.

"I've tried twice to tell that to Henderson, but he dries me up—or makes me mad."

The billing clerk looked concerned.

"Well, he is a dry chap to talk to, but now you go down there and buck up. You just say it off like you said it to me then. I tell you there is something to what you said—'reaches of time', 'bound down to the present'; something to it, Jimmy."

"Well, I'll take another shot, and if I fail to make the riddle this time I guess I'll be going up to Port au Spain on the next boat; so I'll tell you good-by."

The two young men shook hands, and Jimmy started through the sunshine for the office.



THE office of the American Asphalt Company is at the land end of the pier, and Henderson's room was clipped off from the rest by a frosted glass window labeled, "Private." When Jimmy walked in he saw that the two sides overlooking the sea were of glass. Such a bright sea-scape and land-scape ought to have kept Henderson in a charming mood all the time, but they didn't.

The superintendent was writing when Jimmy entered, and he kept on writing without looking up. In fact no one ever went into the superintendent's office without finding him writing; and then the time required for Henderson to look up was an exact index of how important the visitor was. If the visitor was the president of the company from New York Henderson quit and jumped up at once; if he was the secretary, he quit at once; if he was the captain of a liner he crossed a "t" and blotted and quit; if he was the captain of a schooner,

Henderson wrote on for two or three minutes. Smaller men in proportion.

When Jimmy entered, Henderson wrote on and on and on. To kill time Jimmy took off his sun-helmet and began drying the band with his handkerchief. As he wiped he looked at his chief and thought—

"You confounded old bundle of slats, if you never die till politeness kills you, you'll be sitting there writing when the sea dries up."

Then Jimmy thought of something rude to do, so he took out his knife and began cleaning his finger-nails. That helped Jimmy's spirit wonderfully, so he stood there cleaning his finger-nails with a sort of faint grin on his face and watched Henderson write.

After a long while, without either looking up or stopping his writing, Henderson said—

"I've changed all my pitch-digging force for coolies."

Spingarn started as if some one had stuck him with a pin; then he said—

"Yes, sir; I see you have."

"I am going to keep them for a few days," continued Henderson, still not looking up or stopping writing, "so you may go down there, take as many as you need and dig out that fossil thing you found. I'll keep Pennington at your job until you get through."

Jimmy's eyes widened; his mouth went dry.

"Y-yes, sir," he stammered in a squeezed voice.

"I've been thinking over what you said last night, Spingarn, and the way you said it—right out like a man; no mealy-mouth about it. All right; there's your chance; look sharp now."

This last "look sharp" meant for Jimmy to get out. Spingarn was never so dumfounded in his life; he began stammering—

"Y-yes, sir; I—I will, and thank you—th——"

"Look sharp! Look sharp!" cut in the superintendent crisply, which meant; "Get out! Get out!" and he never did either stop writing or look up.

Jimmy Spingarn did the unparalleled thing of running through the sunshine back up the hill to the barreling-plant. As he went by he waved at Pennington and yelled:

"He made me digging-boss! I'm to get it out!"

And he heard Pennington yell back:

"Fine! Fine! I told you old Henderson was all right!"

Spingarn caught a cable car and rattled down the hill.

Jimmy's first act when he reached the lake was to shift a car-track line so the pitch could be hauled up-hill from both sides of the pit; then he took about half his coolies and set them to excavating around the pterodactyl. The shifting of the car-track was nothing extraordinary because all the tracks on the lake had to be moved a few inches every day; otherwise they would have sunk into the pitch and become lost.

As the bottom of the pit slowly fell away from the pterodactyl the American was delighted. The bones of the animal were of course filled with pitch, so that the picks of the Hindus seemed to be carving a grotesque monster out of the lake.

Spingarn watched it develop with the greatest exaltation. He meant to send it to the Smithsonian Institution at Washington. His contribution would be some little help in the scientific world which had afforded him so much pleasure through a mere reading of descriptions.

Then as the bottom of the pit sank lower and lower a very unhappy fact came to light. The head of the pterodactyl was gone. A feeling of dismay came over Jimmy as he became sure of this. The specimen would be incomplete. A missing head was particularly unfortunate as the teeth of prehistoric animals are the most revealing features among the bones. They tell how and what the animal ate; how it caught its prey; whether it grazed, ruminated, used its front feet in eating and a hundred other things. Now this crucial part of the skeleton was gone.

Jimmy looked all over the bottom of the pit a dozen times an hour, hoping to see some trace of the head. He was like a boy feeling into his pocket time and time again for his knife when he knows it is not there.

Then another obstacle developed. As the coolies dug lower, the pitch became softer and softer until their feet stuck and the pitch itself refused to split out in clean blocks as did the hard surface pitch. The coolies worked, paddling their feet up and down to keep from sinking into the lake. As a result, when the diggers finished for the day they had not made the progress Jimmy had hoped.

Besides that, Jimmy knew that soft pitch would rise somewhat during the night; the lower he went the faster it would rise. It looked as if the lake, which had held the pterodactyl for fifty thousand years, were struggling to retain it.

When the whistle blew that afternoon, the boy went back to the dormitory, not exactly discouraged, but seeing that his task was more complicated than he had thought. He was pondering putting on a night force. If the rising of the pitch got too bad he would have to do that, if Henderson would allow it.

As he walked down the line of telepherage, he was pondering this when he saw Daaga, the gigantic, grotesque-looking negro coming toward him. The black man lifted a mighty hand and beckoned Jimmy to stop with all the dignity of an injured negro.

"Mistuh Jimmy—" he began rolling his yellowish eyes at the boy—"I stops you to warn you."

"What about?" asked the boy wearily.

"'Bout dat debbil you is diggin' up out of de lake."

"You have already warned me."

"Yeh, but I now knows why dat debbil is there."

"Why?"

"It ain't got no h-a-i-d!"

The old foreman drawled this out in the most portentous tones.

"Yes, I know that. I wish to Heaven it did have a head," said Jimmy earnestly.

"So do I; so do I!" rumbled Daaga.

Spingarn looked up at the black giant.

"I don't see where you come in?"

"'Cause if it had a haid dat debbil wouldn't be in de lake."

"Wouldn't be in— What nonsense are you talking?"

"No nonsense at all!" swelled up Daaga.

"Now you listen; you listen to me. Don't you know dat debbil come back heah to dis Pitch Lake lookin' fuh his haid? Don't you know——"

"Oh, rot!"

And Jimmy started walking on. This irritated Daaga.

"Yes, suh; yes, suh; lookin' fuh his haid. An he don't care whose haid he gits 'nother. My haid, yo' haid, anybody's haid, jes' so he git a haid."

Daaga was following Jimmy.

"Now look heah, Mistuh Jimmy, talk sense wid me; I got a petition to ask you."

"Well, what is your petition?"

"My petition is if that 'lectricity man what got shocked last night, if he ups and dies, I ask you special to go to Mistuh Henderson and ask him special, to let us niggahs take that 'lectricity niggah's haid and throw it in de pit wid dat debbil and let it sink back out o' sight."

Spingarn was shocked at such a hideous suggestion.

"You mean if that poor fellow dies, chop off his head and throw it in the pit!"

"Bettah do that, boss, than let dat debbil git one of us live fellows' haid, what's usin' 'em."

"Oh, shut up!" cried Spingarn. "You make me sick with your fool superstitions. If you negroes would go to work down there we'd have it out in no time. The coolies are so slow! Hush! Hush!"

Jimmy waved his hand and made the giant stop following him.

"I don't want to hear anything more about heads."

"Oh, all right," nodded Daaga angrily; "but I tell you now, boss, dat debbil is gwineter git *somebody's* haid, an' I hope 'twell not be yo'n."

Spingarn gave a short, weary laugh.

"Thanks, awfully!"

"Oh, all right, all right; have it you' own way!"

 DAAGA'S absurd idea that the fossil in the lake was looking for a head lingered with Spingarn after he had eaten supper that night. He was sitting out in a Morris chair on the piazza, waiting till he should grow sleepy enough to go to bed. He sat tilted back, looking through the screen at the tropical stars. The mesh of the wire gave every star the look of a tiny, shining cross. The wet smell of the sea drifted in on the night air, and the sound of the surf came to his ears. The American was thinking vaguely of his excavation when he heard a slight noise and a moment later saw two or three shadowy forms moving along the edge of the porch outside the screens.

They startled Jimmy by stopping just in front of him, and as they peered inside they pressed their noses and lips against the wire so that they were unrecognizable. Spingarn straightened up, looked and asked who it was.

"Abderath, *sahib*. Me got more *obeah*."

"That's good."

The boy's interest awoke.

"Three men more got one for you but, *sahib*."

"Fine! Fine! Whyn't you bring 'em inside?"

"We try; but Sahib Gunther meet us, say, no; go 'way, *obeah* bad. No get in."

Jimmy got up briskly.

"Thunder he did! Gunther butting in like that! Here, I'll show you whether you can come in or not. Come on back up to the door——"

"No, *sahib*. Why make Sahib Gunther hot? Go to your window, put in *obeahs*, take money, go, more easy."

"Well, I suppose that is the simplest way. Still I'd like to just tell Gunther——"

He broke off, turned back down the piazza and walked to his room with the coolies following him on the outside. He entered his bed-chamber, switched on the light and opened his window screen, and immediately three black hands reached in out of the darkness with their *obeahs*. Jimmy put a fifty-cent piece in each hand and closed the window. The covertness of the transaction gave him a queer feeling that he was doing something forbidden and wrong.

He was starting toward his cabinet with the bundles when there came a knock at the door. Somehow it caused the checker to drop one of his bundles. At that moment the door opened and Gunther entered. It made it a bit awkward, Spingarn reaching down for an *obeah* and Gunther standing there looking at him.

"I see those coolies did get to you after all?" said the creole in disapproving tones. "I tried to run 'em off."

"I know you did," said Spingarn dryly.

As Gunther stood looking at the bundles he actually went pale about the lips. Finally he made a gesture of repulsion.

"Good Lord, man, what do you want with the cursed things?"

He was so worked up about it Jimmy felt sorry for his friend.

"Look here, Gunther," he reasoned, "if we can understand these negroes we can understand ourselves and all humanity better. Every race goes through exactly the same stages. At one time my forefathers and yours believed in witchcraft and talismans and charms. It's a stage of thought on the way from savagery to civilization."

The creole looked at Spingarn.

"You don't mean to say my people made up detestable packages like that?"

"No, but they shot silver bullets at the pictures of witches. A silver bullet made by an old Englishman could very well lie alongside an *obeah* made by a Trinidad negro. When you sift it right down, Gunther, these efforts at witchcraft, charms and so forth are really the beginning of experiments in physical science. If these negroes should try out their *obeahs* for a hundred years and at last find out that they really don't work and there is nothing to them——"

"But I tell you they do work!" exclaimed Gunther. "My daddy had the rheumatism——"

Spingarn smiled involuntarily.

"Oh, yes; I keep forgetting you believe in the things."

"But the minute we found the thing and took it away, my daddy was cured."

Jimmy spread his hands and smiled.

"Psychological."

Gunther looked at him.

"What do you mean by psychological?"

"It was a case of faith cure; the influence of the mind over the body. He thought he would get well if he could find the *obeah*; he found it, so he got well."

"Then the *obeah* cured him," declared Gunther.

"Didn't have a thing in the world to do with it. His own thoughts cured him."

Here Spingarn opened his cabinet to file away his new specimens. When he looked inside, he saw that his first specimen, which he had put in the night before, was gone. He was blankly surprised. He looked at Gunther.

"Why, my other one is gone!" he said.

The Trinidadian reddened slightly, then said in a flat voice:

"I took it out. I didn't want to see anything happen to you."

"You took it out?"

"Yes, you hard-headed goat. Can you blame me? Wouldn't you take a stick of dynamite away from a child that was hammering on it?"

"Gunther," said Jimmy in a steady, controlled irritation, "you are the battiest fool I ever saw. You're as superstitious as any negro in Brighton. What did you do with it; tear it up?"

"No! No, I didn't tear it up! I ought to have——"

"Well, bring it back then!"

In the midst of this controversy the door opened, and Pennington entered, dusting his hands of billiard chalk.

"What in the world are you fellows jawing about?" he asked good-naturedly.

Both men leaped on him at once for justification.

"Spingarn here insists on collecting these confounded *obeahs*. I got one out of his room. I hated to see——"

"He actually did!" nodded Jimmy, raising his voice above Gunther's. "Can you beat it! He came into my room, opened my cabinet and took my specimen!"

"Well, great Scott, Pennington, do you blame me for holding a man's hands when he's trying to blow his brains out—if he's got any brains!"

Pennington came into the room very gravely. He took out his handkerchief to finish his fingers. Instead of laughing or scoffing, as Jimmy thought he would do, he took the matter soberly enough.

"Well, now, it's like this, Jimmy," he began. "When I came here from England I was just like you are about *obeah*, but—I've been here five years now——"

He paused.

"There, there now!" cried Gunther in triumph. "You see he agrees with me."

"Well, no; not exactly," demurred Pennington. "But I do reserve my opinion on the subject. Of course it's all bally rot and everything like that; I'll admit it right off, Spingarn; but the longer I stay here the more I reserve my opinion on the subject."

"Do you mean to say keeping these little bundles in my room will have any influence on me?"

"I'm sure I don't know. Hope not. But since he's got these new ones, Gunther, you might just as well go bring him back the other one; I don't suppose four's any worse than three."

This was certainly a practical, English, common-sense way of looking at a mysterious thing, and it cured the fuss. The English have a wonderful knack of sidestepping theory and persuading things to work by rule of thumb.

"Well, I guess that's so," admitted Gunther. "I'll go bring the thing back; but I warn him now that if he keeps these things in his room he is just as sure to have some serious accident happen to him as I'm standing here."

"I rather think so myself," said Pennington; "but we are not policing the world, Gunther. Jimmy can certainly do as he likes."

"Well, sure, that's right," said Gunther, and he went out of the room.

Pennington rubbed his nose and left a faint smudge of blue chalk on it. He moved over to the window and listened.

"The negroes are holding a big powwow tonight. Listen! Can't you hear them beating the drum?"

Spingarn paid attention, and sure enough the throb of a distant drum pulsed through the darkness. It brought a faint involuntary shiver over the American.

"What are they up to?"

Pennington spread his hands and smiled faintly.

"They are trying to charm that fossil you found back into the lake. One of the negroes was telling me something about it being a devil come for one of their heads."

Pennington laughed again.

"The trouble is," he added, "if the negroes *think* it is after their heads it is very likely to get one."

"That's what I say," nodded Spingarn. "It's psychological."

"Well—yes——"

Then he sidestepped theory again by saying:

"After all, Spingarn, what difference does it make just *how* these *obeahs* work if they work? You know, if I were you I don't believe I'd keep those things in my cabinet. Of course, there may be nothing to them—I reserve my opinion on that point—but why take a chance?"

At that moment Gunther returned with the first *obeah*. He had it tied to a string and was holding to the tip of the string.

"Spingarn," he said, "I ask you now as your friend and well-wisher to let me take all this mess of truck out and burn it."

"No; I'll keep it. Now, if I believed in it, it might harm me; it's psychological; but as I don't believe in it at all ——"

"It'll harm you anyway," said Gunther.

"That's a point I'll reserve my opinion on till morning," said Pennington. "There's no use spinning long theories about a thing when you can just wait and see."

This was so clearly a sensible view to take that everyone in a way was satisfied, and Jimmy's two visitors went out.



THERE seemed to be something worth considering in the billing clerk's matter-of-fact way of looking at *obeah*. Spingarn went to the window and stood listening to the far-off reverberation of the drum. He wondered what the negroes were doing, what sort of spell they were trying to weave out there in the darkness. A thought came to him that they might have some sort of occult power such as the fakirs of India are said to possess. In that instance——

A slight rustling behind him caused him to look around sharply. It came from the *obeah*. The checker stood perfectly still, watching the faintly rustling bundle with fixed eyes. Then a mouse leaped up on the bundle from the other side and sat shivering and shivering under the electric light. It stared back to Spingarn out of little eyes that protruded like tiny jet beads. Presently it seemed to regard Jimmy as some part of the furniture, for it ran to the end of the bundle and began nibbling at the tail of the dead snake.

This seemed to loose some spring in him. He rushed toward it, waving a hand and frightening it away. Then he put the *obeah* in his cabinet.

When Spingarn went to bed he found all sorts of difficulties in going to sleep. Notwithstanding his determination his nerves were jumpy, and when finally he did doze off he was beset in his dreams by flying dragons, snakes and mice and negroes beating a drum. He roused out of one of these nightmares with his face bathed in cold sweat and with a feeling of some terrible thing hanging over him. He lay in bed slowly unkinking his muscles after his dream-struggle when he heard his name whispered in the darkness.

Coming just at this moment, it sent goose-flesh over him. He lifted his head and listened. After a minute or two he thought he must have been mistaken, when he heard his name repeated in the same guarded whisper.

"Well, well, what is it?" asked Spingarn rather overloudly.

"Is that Sahib Jim?" aspirated the voice.

"Yes," said Spingarn a little more normally. "What do you want?"

"*Sahib*, Abderath is gone."

The American sat up in bed with a creaking of springs.

"Abderath is gone?" he repeated.

"Yes, *sahib*. Abderath's wife come to my hut, wake me; she say devil got Abderath."

The American got up, groped his way to the lamp and turned the switch. He turned it so nervously that it went clear over, made a flash and was dark again. He made three trials before the light stayed on. Then he saw the noses and lips of three Hindus pressed against his wire screen.

"Why did you come to me?" asked Jimmy, thinking of the *obeah* in his cabinet.

"We know you not 'fraid of devils, *sahib*; come to you. Other *sahibs* all 'fraid."

Came a pause; then the checker asked mechanically—

"Well—what do you want me to do about it?"

"Go find Abderath, *sahib*; fight devil."

"Hm!" said Jimmy.

At two o'clock in the night that sounded like a man-sized job.

"Are you fellows going with me?"

"We show you which way Abderath went, *sahib*. We no go; we 'fraid devils."

Spingarn pondered this for a moment and then began putting on his clothes. He dressed with considerable deliberation, considering that he was going out to rescue a man who had been caught by the devil.

Outside a sea breeze souged through the night, bringing with it a sense of mystery. The street lights of Brighton were off; they were always turned off at midnight. Spingarn could just see the coolies who had come for him, black outlines against the general darkness. By his flashlight he identified his guides as the Hindus who had sold him their *obeahs* in the early part of the night. Then the four set off northward toward the negro and coolie quarters of the town.

When they got away from the bungalows and asphalt walks of the white section Spingarn might have stepped into Africa or India itself. The road became dusty, the air disagreeable with the smell of unkept premises. Lights moved to and fro among the thatched huts, and the sound of sobbing among excited voices came to Spingarn.

As the white man approached one of the huts one of his guides called out—

"Here is a *sahib* not afraid of the devil."

Jimmy cleared his throat and went on up to the hut entrance. A smell of *roti*, or pancakes fried in coconut oil, and rice and curry greeted Jimmy's nose, and the chatter

in Hindustani of several coolie women assailed his ears.

In the center of the group in the hut was a little girl about eleven years old. She was weeping and burning some sort of powder in an old pewter spoon with a candle flame.

The light of the candle was reflected in a coat of polished metal which covered the child's breast and arms. A closer look showed that this metal breastplate was composed of hundreds of gold and silver coins linked together like a coat of mail.* This was coolie jewelry. The child was shaking so she could not keep the flame of the candle under the spoon and so exorcise the devil who had raided her home.

"There, Najka, stop crying," said one of the older women. "Here is the *sahib* who will find Abderath. What did the devil look like? Which way did he go? Tell the *sahib*."

The child, loaded with bracelets, anklets and the shining breastplate came clinking to the door. She talked as fast as her frightened little tongue could clatter.

"It was a devil with horns, *sahib*; three devils with horns. Our little dog barked. Then the devils came in and struck a match. Abderath screamed when he saw them, but one of the devils put a hand over his mouth and lifted him like a feather. Then they went without a sound with Abderath on their shoulders. Oh, they were devils! I shall never see Abderath again."

And the child began weeping anew.

"You see, *sahib*, it was the devil; it had horns. Here Najka, Abderath's wife, says so."

"What!" ejaculated Jimmy. "That child Abderath's wife?"

One of the women was saying, "Tell *sahib* which way they went, Najka," and the child was pointing a direction.

It was toward the Pitch Lake.

By this time Spingarn had a clear-cut theory of what had happened. He knew who had the strength to shoulder Abderath "like a feather," and he knew just what the negroes wanted with Abderath. A little shiver of horror went over the checker. He turned from the hut.

"Come on fellows," he said in a strained voice. "Let's get to the lake."

*Coolie women used so many coins for jewelry that they threatened to exhaust the currency in Trinidad, and a law was enacted making this use illegal.

He started off abruptly at a trot. The coolie guides came pattering after him.

"*Sahib*," gasped one, "what you do?"

"I'm going to get Abderath out of the lake—if it isn't too late."

Presently they left the beaten road, and Jimmy used his flashlight occasionally to make plain the path ahead. They were going up a knoll when one of the coolies stopped.

"*Sahib*," he said, "you know all I know. I go back."

Spingarn looked about and flashed his light on his guides. It was clear that they had gone as far as they dared in the devil hunt. So the American let them go and hurried on. He knew that the negroes had kidnapped Abderath, and that if he found the negroes in time these Hindus would be of no service. He did not anticipate much trouble in rescuing Abderath. The blacks were accustomed to take orders from the white officials of the company. No matter how worked up they were, Jimmy did not believe Daaga and his fellows would resist him.

Jimmy hurried on breathlessly up the hill which he knew to be the north slope of the Pitch Lake. When he reached the top an extraordinary scene burst on his eyes. The inky-black Pitch Lake was jeweled with tropical fireflies. There were thousands of these tiny lanterns; and there was a sort of rhythm in their flashing, as if some leader beat time to this orchestra of greenish light.

However, the fireflies seemed to make the blackness about them darker than ever. Spingarn hurried down the hill, flashing his lamp now and then as if he were some sort of king firefly among his innumerable subjects.

As he went he drew a great breath and began calling Abderath's name. His voice rolled over the fire-spangled lake. He paused now and then to listen for an answer, but heard nothing.

As Jimmy went down the slope the air became warmer and warmer; and when he stepped on the surface of the pitch he found that the great black lake had retained almost a noonday heat. He went on through the warm air, still calling Abderath; but his voice was lost in the twinkling blackness.

Suddenly as he ran along his feet began sticking in the lake. He stopped and

backed quickly to firm pitch. Near the center of the lake there are soft places in the pitch where one could easily sink in. When Jimmy was in safety again the thought of these quagmires made him nervous.

As he shouted again for Abderath he switched his flashlight about him to see which way to go. But the light told nothing. It showed smooth black pitch in all directions. Then Jimmy realized that he had lost his direction. He was turned around.

He moved forward gingerly in the spangled darkness when a car-track came in the radiance of his light. Spingarn made to it gratefully, for this not only oriented him but gave him a sure footing. He got on the track and started toward the fossil pit at that peculiar long-legged, loping walk which a man must use when he hurries and takes two cross-ties at a step.

The checker was spraddling along in this fashion when he happened to see a firefly gleaming down below the surface of the pitch. If it had not been for this he would probably have passed the pit. He stopped his hip-hopping and turned his light on the excavation.

The great fossil seemed to arise out of the darkness at the touch of the light. Jimmy saw that the skeleton, filled with heavy pitch, had listed during the night; and some of the pitch, seeping down through the bones, gave it a queer, uncanny look in the blackness.

But just at this moment it was not the fossil that interested Jimmy. He played his light all around the hole, his nerves jumpy for fear that he should see what he expected to see. However, the pit appeared empty except for the careening monster.

Jimmy breathed his relief, stepped off the track and started around the margin of the excavation to examine carefully the whole interior. He walked around, flashing his light downward at every step to make sure that his suspicions were unfounded. Presently he was on the side of the fossil opposite the cable track.

He flashed his light here and there. It made a luminous yellow circle with a bright outer ring, then a dimmer space, then a very bright center. As he went ahead, flashing it over every inch of the bottom, all at once Spingarn's heart quit beating. His flashlight shook over the bottom. Its

clear center danced over an object, left it, returned, because the boy trembled so he could not control his hand.

Suddenly tears stung Spingarn's eyes. With a swallow he thought of Najka with her frightened face and breastplate of gold. Her weeping wail that she would never see Abderath again was too true. There in the bottom of the pit lay the coolie's head.

The sight turned Jimmy sick. The thing had a rag bound about its mouth, and it lay on the back of the head staring straight up at the flashlight. Then as the checker stared down an incredible thing happened. The eyes opened and shut. The head was alive.

Terror seized Jimmy as if he had been a child. Here was some unthinkable African magic which could preserve a horrible vitality in decapitated heads. A prickle of ice went over Jimmy's skin. He stared down hypnotized by the bandaged head and slowly batting eyes.



THEN the scientist that was in him came to his rescue. He knew that chopped-off heads could not stay alive. He knew that what he saw must be Abderath buried in the pitch and gagged so he could not call. Abderath was alive. A profound relief swept over Spingarn. The next moment he leaped down into the pit to rescue the wretched coolie.

The beam of the flashlight whisked about during his fall, but when he struck bottom he steadied it on the head. He reached down, caught the coolie under the back of the neck and tried to pull him out.

He might as well have pulled at a gatepost anchored in concrete. He strained Abderath's neck, but did not move him in the slightest degree. The boy tore the gag from the Hindu's mouth and Abderath gasped out a "*Sahib!*" The pitch settling about his chest was suffocating him.

As Jimmy pulled at the head again, the coolie wheezed out—

"Eh, *sahib*; hurt."

"But Abderath!" cried the boy. "I've got to pull. I——"

"Get help, *sahib*."

"You'll be under before I get back."

"All same, *sahib*," whispered the buried man. "You no start, no get back."

"Sure, of course!" cried Jimmy, and he made a lunge to get out.

But Jimmy's lunge accomplished nothing

at all except a movement of his body. His feet did not budge. He switched his light down and saw that his feet were in pitch up to his shoe-tops.

For a moment he stood looking at his feet, which had mired so quickly. Then he gave strong pulls, first at one, then at the other. They seemed to give a little.

He became apprehensive again and settled down to a steady pull to get out one foot. He locked his hands under his knee and flung his whole back into a strain of lifting. He could feel his foot rising by millimeters through the soft pitch. Sweat broke out on his body and trickled down his underclothing with a feeling of crawling insects. He strained, it seemed for minutes; then with a faint sucking sound his foot came out of the pitch.

Spingarn gave a great sobbing gasp, rested a second and then attempted to step out. His other leg might have been a post. It was mired to the knee.

Spingarn stared at his leg, shocked. It was hopelessly buried. He was caught. His clothes were wet now, through and through, with sweat. He stood bent over and, panting heavily, looked at his knee, which slowly sank deeper as he watched it.

The head of Abderath beneath him whispered—"Better sit, *sahib*, no sink so fast."

The counsel struck Jimmy as good. He sat down; one leg swung down into the pitch, the other straight on the surface. And then the scientist in Jimmy told him that by no possibility could he have pulled out of the pitch once he was caught. Every effort to pull up one leg would press down on the other; and then the force of gravitation would be a constant against him. And Jimmy Spingarn remembered the four *obeahs* in his cabinet.

The pitch crept up very gradually about the boy. His brain leaped among plans of escape like a caged animal dashing itself against a cage. There was no way. His leg in the pitch was growing numb. He sank steadily.

All of a sudden he began a terror-stricken flouncing and pulling. He strained himself away with his hands and felt the pitch ooze up through his fingers. He jerked them out and pushed again. He drained the last pound of strength there was in his body and finally collapsed, panting, sobbing

and dripping. Then he heard Abderath whisper—

"Better be still, *sahib*; work down deeper fast."

A faint hope came to him with Abderath's voice. He said—

"Abderath, you're staying on top a long time."

"Yes, *sahib*," aspirated the coolie. "Me hit something; hold me up."

Jimmy was shocked.

"You've hit something—you're not sinking any more!"

"No, *sahib*, I stay."

Came a pause; then the checker quavered in a ghastly voice—

"Abderath, why in God's name didn't you tell me that at first!"

"Me gagged, *sahib*."

And that was the irony of the thing. Spingarn had thrown his own life away to save a man who was already safe. This was too much. Spingarn began shrieking and yelling and sobbing. The half-buried man filled the pit with his uproar. He heaved up, trying to free his hips and the lower part of his body from the mire. He stared at the stars and prayed God to help him.

Just then a firefly came flashing and lowering itself into the pit. It circled like a little yellow fire here and there and finally lighted on Jimmy's chin.

For some strange reason this filled the checker with the utmost terror. He shrieked and tried to knock it off, but his elbows were fastened in the mire where he had been trying to support his body. At the feel of the fly walking over his face he screeched and shook his head and collapsed.

There came a gap in his consciousness. He did not know how long he lay. It was as if his little remnant of time, before he was sucked into eternity, had raveled out unevenly. He did not know when the torture of the fly ended or when another light shone down on his face. But he became aware that a voice which sounded far, far away was shouting:

"Is that you, Jimmy Spingarn? I'm coming down!"

And Spingarn had just enought sanity left to cry:

"For God's sake, keep out of here! Go back and get help!"

Came another silence and another raveling of time. Then Spingarn became aware of a small army of gigantic negroes working feverishly about him under a veritable battery of flashlights. And as they toiled they kept up a continual dancing of their big, naked feet to prevent themselves from sinking into the soft pitch.

As the black giants worked, they prayed and cursed, but Henderson stood on the edge of the pit and threatened them with hanging if they did not get the two men out of the pit alive. So the negroes worked on terrifically. They were afraid of *obeah*, but they were still more afraid of an English judge and the English law.

The man who had found Spingarn in the pit was Gunther. Notwithstanding their quarrel the creole had grown uneasy about his friend and had again visited Jimmy's room. When he found it empty he immediately *knew* that Jimmy was buried in the pitch beside the fossil, and he went flying down to see. He arrived on the lake just in time to hear the American shrieking.

Strange to say, the object which had upheld Abderath for so long was the dislocated skull of the pterodactyl. The negroes dug this out along with the coolie.

Henderson did not let the black men rest until they had hoisted the whole skeleton out of the pit and loaded it on to a cable car. They accomplished this by six o'clock next morning, and in time it was shipped to the Smithsonian Institution at Washington.

As for Spingarn's collection of *obeahs*, Gunther destroyed them the second night he entered Jimmy's room. He did it, he said, "so Jimmy would have a chance."

The whole episode has left the matter of *obeah* as enigmatic as ever. Gunther claims it has proved his views absolutely. Spingarn asserts that it was a sequence of strict causes and effects from start to finish. The negroes clamor that the devil found his head and went away satisfied. Pennington says that it is possible each and any of them may be right, that Nature may be a sort of manifold; a series of disparate worlds superimposed upon and through each other, so that men may choose what they will. He reserves his opinion for further proof.



Necklaces and Dan Wheeler

by John I. Cochrane



*A Four-Part
Story
Part II*

Author of "Sled Wheeler and the Nameless Order," "Sled Wheeler and the Diamond Ranch," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.

"I WAS looking for you, Mac."

Stuart McLeod, fresh from the penitentiary where he had served sentence on a charge of which he was guiltless, turned and faced Dan "Sled" Wheeler.

For the next few hours things flowed smoothly for Mac. Dan, needing a helper in apprehending the "Spark Gang," diamond thieves, provided clothes, food and peace of mind for Mac, whom he had saved from a fight with a German manufacturer. Mac was having the same trouble that falls to the lot of most ex-convicts. With Mac's honest admission of his residence for the past few months the German had set up a great hue and cry. It was then that Dan Wheeler had put in an appearance.

An evening at the theater, dodging a detective, brought Mac and Dan face to face with Mary Mason and Piet Van Twiller. Mary Mason was McLeod's uncle's charge, and to Mac she was The Girl. Mac did not speak.

Leaving the theater, Dan laid out a plan for Mac. Somehow Dan knew that somebody was out to "get" Mac, and that if he was steered into East Nineteenth Street they would see action. Mac was to go alone, Dan to follow in a cab. Sure enough when he turned into the dark street, a cab, not Dan's, followed. At the same instant he saw a big bruiser in a red sweater almost upon him. He was trapped—a man before and behind!

In a few minutes the fight was over. Dan was leaning over him.

"Mac! Are you hurt?"

"No. Just a bump. He said—" pointing to the Red Sweater, who was lying in the gutter—"he said, 'Kill the ———!'"

"He said that?"

"Necklaces and Dan Wheeler." copyright, 1924, by John I. Cochrane.

A swift resolution for revenge passed through Dan. He turned toward the assailant.

"Who's paying you for this?"

"Matty de Mick," admitted the man, whimpering.

That was enough for Dan. The man was hastily warned to get out of town. A cab was hired. Matty's joint on the Bowery was the destination.

"GOOD evening, Matty."

Wheeler stepped forward holding out his hand, a slim, effeminate hand, but one that held merciless strength.

"Keep off!" rasped the tough. "You beat me up when I was a kid, but you don't work that again."

In the moment of the hand-clasp Wheeler had twisted the gangster around and pinned his arm against his back.

"Now, Matty, who paid you for this?" he asked.

They got the information that a masked man living under the Russian consulate had been the instigator of the attack on Mac. Dan's warning to Matty to leave the boy alone in the future was physical and painful. The pair left the Bowery joint, with Matty unconscious on the table. Dan had broken Matty's arm with his own two hands.

On their way up-town Wheeler and McLeod came across Piet Van Twiller and Reginald Willing, a former friend of Mac's; Piet happily and helplessly drunk. With a promise to call on him some day at the Grand Union Hotel, Mac helped Reggie into a carriage with Piet. The two drove off. Dan, ready for anything, gave orders to his cabman to take Mac and him to an address in Pell Street. They stopped before a shop bearing the sign—

Huen Ling. Importer.

THEY were ushered into the presence of a tall, magnificent, dignified Oriental.

He spoke with the purest English:

"You came just in time, Mr. Wheeler. I have been out on business that concerns both of you—if this is Mr. Stuart McLeod. Yes, I see the family resemblance."

After a recital of their experiences, Huen Ling told them of the operations of the Spark Gang, and added that in detecting the gang there were two serious complications—one, that the contents of certain papers inimical to the diplomatic circles in Washington must not be made known.

"And the other?" asked Dan.

"The other is perhaps not so much a complication as an incentive. Did you know that Alan McLeod—" Mac's wealthy uncle—"was a close friend, years ago, of your friend and instructor, Slater?" To Dan's affirmative, he went on—

"Then I do not need to press my argument?"

Dan's hoarse whisper roused McLeod, who was falling to sleep from exhaustion.

"I'll get him if we both live. But what's your reason?"

Mac could not hear the reply. But he heard the Chinaman add—

"It is now your duty."

THE next Mac knew was that it was daylight.

He was back in his hotel. He had slept through a day and a night. Dan hastily showed him the newspapers, in which was an account of McLeod's unjust sentence and service in the penitentiary.

"But," he said, "there is a better story than that. The 'Mysterious Israfil' was robbed of his diamonds last night. Explosion and fire; diamonds walked off in the confusion. Regular Spark Gang job. Israfil is a hypnotist, and lectures to some of the smart set just now on it as well as on jujutsu, and

he does the stunts himself. I think he is a bluff, and I know the Jap wrestling, so we ought to be able to call him. But let that go. Piet called this morning and said that you were to see your uncle immediately after breakfast."

TWO hours later Mac faced his uncle, whom he had not seen for years.

"First," said the old man, "I want you to know that I am going to leave you and Mary Mason my money equally divided. Second: Is there any reason why you can't come here to stay for the few days or weeks I have yet to live?"

To Mac it was a poser. He had promised to help Dan. He couldn't turn down now the man who had taken him out of the streets, cold, hungry and out of work, and launched him again into a world that was warm and good.

He shook his head.

"No, I have to stick to Dan Wheeler."

"Then if you must you must. But I don't care to have Wheeler meet Mary, and I want to warn you not to fall in love with her, for she ought to make a brilliant marriage. I think I have found a man for her. Within a few days I expect a young English nobleman——"

The strain of the interview was telling on the old man. Mac couldn't stay after Mary Mason was announced. From his bed the older McLeod whispered:

"Stop at the bank for your check-book on your way back. *Don't* break with Wheeler. I may have to leave you to protect Mary. Wheeler is dangerous to both men and women, but *don't offend him!* If you ever need advice go to Huen Ling!"

He closed his eyes and looked like a corpse as Mac hurried out to send in the waiting nurse.

When Stuart McLeod left his uncle's house he had fallen in love with Mary Mason.

V

WELL, been there all day?"

Mac found himself in the hotel reading-room, looking into Wheeler's green eyes which had brought him out of his daze. Dan was as vividly alert and alive as always, and he looked as if nothing unpleasant had ever passed between them.

"Ye—"

"No," Mac stammered. "We walked in the Park—and the Art Museum, and this afternoon I—I remembered to get my check-book," he finished proudly.

"Good-by! She has got you on the ropes, right!" said Dan resignedly. "You are just sticky and dripping with it! Want you to pay me off and give me the hook—did he?" he asked coldly.

"No—he wants to see you."

"Hm!" Dan grunted non-committally; then after a look about the room, "Did he mention the Necklace?"

"No. What neck——"

"S-st! Not so loud! Come up-stairs and dike up before dinner. We are going out again this evening, and I want you to meet this man Israfil. The one I told you about this morning—you remember, the one who had his sparks stolen?"

Mac nodded gravely. As they started up the stairs he was thinking of the morning's quarrel, and he wanted to explain that he had not intended any offense—even in his thoughts.

"Say—I didn't m-m-mean—" he began, but Wheeler headed him off.

"I know. We are not going to scrap now. You are not responsible for anything you do any more. What is her favorite flower, and how did she like 'The Professor's Love Story'? How many offers has she turned down this week—did she tell you?"

Here Dan shot a side-glance as they mounted the stairs, and saw that Mac was getting white around the mouth. Dan laid a hand lightly on his arm as he whispered:—

"Don't shoot, Mac! I apologize! I went off half-cocked this morning, and I don't blame you for anything. She is a wonder. If she listens like she looks she's a whole orchestra by moonlight. You can't find another in the same class with her. And you have got a nice new check-book. This is a great evening—what?"

Wheeler was fairly crackling with electric energy and high spirits.

"What is the matter with you?" Mac asked. "Have you been drinking?"

"Not a drink! I am doing this for effect," Dan confided as they passed along the carpeted hall toward their door. "Watch me!"

He raised his voice again—

"And all New York is wise that I've struck town!"

He struck up a song then current:

Oh, they're af-ter me! Af-ter me! To capture me,
It is their one desire!
But I'm a shrinking violet—me!
I don't like the limelight, and—

With the key in the lock, Dan suddenly threw the room door open. But instead of going in he sprang back—darted across the hall to the opposite door, which stood open a crack, and threw his weight against it. The door yielded, and with bewildering swiftness Wheeler snatched a man from behind it—hustled him across the hall and into their room with Mac and himself—closed the door behind him and without a quick breath or any sign of excitement asked the spy:

"What is this, Gus? Rehearsing for the detec-a-tive role in 'A Bucket of Blood'—or am I pinched? Mr. Stuart McLeod, let me present Captain Aloysius Patrick McGuire—William J. Brine's right bower and protector of the rich—commonly known as Grouchy Gus. What it is, Gus? Come clean!"

McGuire was slim and gracefully handsome with waxed black mustache, which he twirled composedly as he spoke in a purring tone:

"Strikes me you're doing the play to the gallery, Wheeler. I was coming to see you on the quiet. The Chief thought perhaps you'd come in on this Spark Gang job, if it could be kept absolutely dark. It was his idea you might get better results if it was not known you were working with us—or even if it was made to look as if you were fighting us, working against the Central Office. So I got in here with a pass-key. Even the front clerk doesn't know I am in

the building, unless you spilled the beans just now."

McGuire's smile meant that he rather thought he had put the great Sled Wheeler in a hole, but Dan was coolly ironical as he deliberately answered:

"Wonderful brains in the Central Office! William J. must be a mind-reader. I suppose Israfil has taught him his crystal-gazing stunt—I hear Israfil is at work with you under the same sort of contract. And the Chief wants to take me on, on the same sort of arrangement? Is that the idea?"

"Something like that. He wouldn't bother you with orders or regulations, of course."

McGuire hastened to explain:

"You'd work by yourself as you saw fit, if you would only report any important discovery or plant you might make. May I sit down? Thanks. You have heard the latest? About the missing papers, and the man from Washington?"

"The Secretary? Yes."

Wheeler deliberated an instant before going on.

"And I will give you a bit of news—not to go beyond Brine. The Secretary came to me first and made me a private offer. If I get those papers—that parchment, for it is one sheet of parchment—I am to be paid well for it. So I shall beat you to it if I can. And—like our friend McNamara—'I have hopes!' "

The last he addressed to McLeod, turning from McGuire as if to close the interview.

"Then you're going to go up against the whole Central Office?"

McGuire got up with dignity.

"Suppose we want to stop you—have you run in about once a day?" he suggested.

"Brine knows better," Wheeler said carelessly. "You know it. But try it if you want to—tell Brine that. One other thing!"

He checked McGuire as the latter turned to the door and went on:

"Tell Brine I will report one discovery to the Central Office right now. Tell him to look at home for a leak. Tell him he has a traitor—a spy working for the thief—right in his own office. Good night, Gus!"

McGuire stood for a minute, too stunned to conceal his astonishment. Then he reddened angrily.

"I'll tell him, and I'll tell you this! I wouldn't insure your life for a hundred dollars if you paid me five dollars a minute. And don't holler to us for help, either!"

"Thank you, Gus. Good-night, and happy dreams!"

Dan stood in the door until McGuire was out of ear-shot before closing it and turning to McLeod, looking happier than ever.

"Now I know we are off! We are going to get action 'most any time—and we ought to celebrate this evening. After we eat we'll see John T. Kelley at Pastor's—ever hear him talk?"

"Is he 'the Rolling-Mill Man'?"

"The same. He is all right—you'll like him. You'll wake up in the night to laugh about it."

Wheeler was choosing a clean collar cheerily.

"Look here!"

Mac paused on his way to the set bowl.

"Did McGuire mean that as a direct threat or a prophecy?"

Wheeler was making faces at the ceiling as he struggled with a front collar-button, but he stopped to grin at Mac with admiration.

"Now who says there's nothing in a college education? 'A threat or a prophecy'—very neat! No, Gus is not hunting for bother—not with Danny. He was prophesying a few, I guess. What's the diff? The prospect of sudden death is always soothing—all I needed to make me feel at home again. It will be a large evening."

And Dan chuckled at himself in the mirror, repeating under his breath—

"'A threat or a prophecy'—hot stuff!"

 AS McLEOD watched Wheeler quietly enjoying himself thus, he was thinking of what his uncle had said of this man—of his fascination, and how dangerous he could be to man or woman, and at that instant Dan rounded on him with—

"Uncle say I was a dangerous man to have around—did he?"

"N-No—n-not to your friends," Mac stammered, reddening.

"And he wanted to know if you were sure I was a friend, eh?" Wheeler went on with a quick grin, then sobered suddenly. "Tell him not to worry. Neither one of you ever did me any harm, and he did me a good turn once, though he doesn't know it. Tell him I was *the man in the junk at Hang Chow*, and he'll remember. Then maybe he will tell you about the necklace, and that will help. Don't forget!"

He had lowered his voice with a look at the door.

"I won't forget. Can't you tell me any more? What neck——"

"I wouldn't talk about it now," Wheeler interrupted. "It may be too dangerous. I can't tell for sure. What I can tell you is this: I never did a woman any harm yet. I am not that kind of a dirty sneak. So you can get that off your mind—both of you. I'm ready to eat."

He faced about as he put on his coat, and saw the flush on Mac's face while he was talking good-naturedly:

"You're all right—come on. If we look any sweeter we'll be arrested for stopping the traffic. What you blushing at? Don't you believe what I said—about women? *Answer me!*"

The transition from cheerfulness to fiery anger was so violent—the last two words stung so like a whiplash—that Mac could not speak at once.

"Certainly I believe it, and so would he—my uncle. He wants to see you. I told you that."

"All right—let's drill. Hay-foot—straw-foot—we're off! One thing sure," Dan resumed thoughtfully: "I can't do Miss Mason any harm by staying away from that house, so I'll stay away. Then your uncle won't worry. What do you want to do this evening? Any place you'd rather go than Pastor's?"

"No. I feel like loafing about, to let my good luck soak in—to realize it."

"Soak it is!" said Dan promptly. "Want to get drunk?"

"I never got much fun out of it," Mac admitted.

"Nor anybody else, unless the moon is just right," Wheeler assented. "Besides, I am apt to get mean after three to seven drinks, and then there's a mess to clean up. We'll loaf and let ourselves soak in around at the Chapel, and drink imported Münchener—slow. They have it just cool enough there—it's too cold here."

Dan completed his program as they sat down at their table:

"We go there after Pastor's, and maybe to Hawley's later. I want you to meet this Israfil and give me your opinion—he's got me guessing."

Wheeler showed a new and delightful side as they dined in a leisurely way. He deliberately set out to be "soothing and

cheering," in his own words. He talked freely and pithily about all kinds of things, and McLeod never was more delightfully entertained. Only once was he reminded of the merciless manhandler who had mangled Matty the Mick, and that was when Dan was holding forth on the subject of crooks—his pet aversion.

"They are all sneaks—yellow curs—I hate 'em!" he repeated his former summing-up of the subject.

"How about the big criminals?" Mac asked.

"Killers, you mean?" Dan said promptly. "Sure! Most of 'em are crooks, cowards. A killer is generally a yellow cur who kills his first man because he is afraid of him. Then it gets him. He gets the killing habit—has a craving to kill because it gives him a sensation and numbs the fear in him for the time. He keeps at it until he meets a meaner man who takes an advantage of him—for most of 'em kill without risk to themselves—or a better man than he is. Then it's good-by, Mr. Bad-Man! He's either dead or broke; and once a killer is broke, or has a good scare thrown into him, he's *gone!*"

He made these statements casually, stating familiar axioms, but to McLeod the matter was largely new and absorbing. He was watching the play of Wheeler's dilating green eyes, and thinking of the desperate killers whom Dan was said to have "croaked" or "broke"—those were the very words he had heard used on the Island.

This man before him was the very one whom the prisoners looked upon with fear and admiration amounting to awe. He recalled the names of three famous gun-men whom Wheeler had met and destroyed—"Poison" Potter, "Smiling" Snead and "Ghost" Garth; the alliterative names were easy to remember. Unconsciously he spoke the last aloud—

"Ghost Garth."

Wheeler did not look up. He seemed to think he had spoken the name himself, for he remarked—

"Garth was a crazy killer—no other way to stop him, and he had to stop!"

Mac watched the green eyes, fixed on distance, as they dilated and contracted, and hoped for the story. But Wheeler only finished his coffee in silence and drew a long, restful breath.

"Did you ever get licked?" Mac exploded half-involuntarily.

"Me? Sure!"

Wheeler grinned with a genuine delight that made Mac chuckle. The cold, contemptuously cruel face was alight with a rare impersonal humor as Dan told the story he liked best to repeat. He told it with exquisite effect, because of the quaint inflections and expressions of face that words can not present. With short, broad strokes he pictured the scene in the Chicago bar-room, where he had been "insulted" by a dude who refused to drink any thing stronger than lemonade.

"I was always insulted after six or seven drinks, those days," Dan explained, "and this dude got on my nerves. He was too slick and sure he was it. I told him he'd drink whisky straight with me or take a licking, and he didn't believe me. Then I was *in-sult-ed* for fair. I threw the whisky in his face.

"He wore a monocle. He took it out of his eye and wiped it." (*Illustrated.*)

"Then he says, 'I shall have to punch your face, me man.' I hated the sight of Britishers anyway, those days, but I waited until he got off his coat and was good and ready.

"Then I sailed in—just plain fighting—and got my face punched right. He landed one left swing like the kick of a mule and they picked me out of the corner—with a broken jaw. Feel that ridge—e-ah—Well, then somebody hollered the cops were coming.

"They tried to hustle us out different ways, but not so! Me lud is not running any this evening—it isn't done, y'know. When he starts anything he sees it to a proper finish. Run from a bobby? My word! He tells the cop his friend is hurt and needs a surgeon, and he says to me, 'Awfully sorry, old chap, but I think it's broken, really!' he says.

"All the noise I can make with my chin around under one ear, like that, is something like, 'Gaw—gaw'—and even that hurts like sin. Me man stays right with me. We are taken to the police-station together, but he protests it's an outrage—"This man is suffering, don't y'know!"—and neither one will make any charge.

"So we pay a fine for disturbing the peace, and then he takes me to a doctor who sets my jaw in a minute—and the first words I

say are, 'You are a gentleman.' And that is what he was. Since then I have known a number of Englishmen, and they're all right after they find there are other places on the map beside London."

It was a long story for Dan, and he took a rest after it, thoughtfully watching Mac chuckle while he finished his cheese and coffee. Already he was off on another tack mentally, and he suddenly leaned over the table while the waiter was out of hearing to say hurriedly:

"Speaking of other places on the map, don't forget to tell your uncle what I said, 'The man in the junk at Hang Chow.' And one other thing. Did he tell you to go to Huen Ling in case of trouble? Yes—well—same here! If I should disappear for a day or more and you are in doubt what to do, go to the same man; understand? I know you don't; but remember it anyway—go to Huen Ling to ask questions—nowhere else. That's all. Let's ramble!"



SO THEY rambled, and Wheeler told several people he was back in New York. Several others seemed to know it without telling, and McLeod marveled at their number. When Dan was in that mood he did not need any stimulant to make life a richly quiet joke, and his companion was enjoying the walk so keenly that he proposed to keep it up.

"What do you want to go to Pastor's for? This is more fun than anything on the stage," said Mac. "If this dry jag of yours keeps up, I don't care to hear the Rolling-Mill Man."

"But it won't," said Dan. "I am due to fizzle out in half an hour; then the evening will bog down on us. And it's just time for Kelley to come on now—and here is the place. We can come out afterward; but your education is a botched job until you hear Kelley. Come with Danny!"

Nothing is more futile than trying to tell about a monolog in print. No words in ink can bring back the rich, genial humor of the Rolling-Mill Man. Blessed is he whose memory holds the picture of Kelley in his frock-coat and dull silk hat, giving his classic rendering of the severely precise gentleman trying to make his wife believe he has come home cold sober. It has been widely imitated and never approached.

Its effect on McLeod and Wheeler was strong and varied as they came out into

Fourteenth Street. Mac was still weak and gasping; Wheeler had a queer glint in his tiger eyes.

"That does settle it. John T. said it—I have got it to do, and I may as well get it over. Here is where I lap up a few to start—right here."

And he led the way to a saloon on the corner opposite.

While Dan was speaking they met again the young swell they had seen at the hat-store. He gave Dan an ugly look as he nodded in passing. It seemed to cheer Wheeler up, and he said:

"Steve doesn't love me any more. You say he's a Harvard man. Know him much?"

Mac shook his head. "Only by sight," he replied. "He's the amateur heavyweight champion—not in my class."

And he asked—

"What have you done to him?"

Dan looked innocent.

"He was at Hawley's last night," Dan said, "and he wanted to know what a Jap wrestler would do if he swung on the Jap with his famous right. He showed how he would swing, and I showed what the Jap would do—and he broke a chair when he came down."

"He's doing some thinking now about getting square—I know the breed. Father's from County Mayo—Tammany and a barrel of coin. Steve Collins now butts into the smart set and can't see plain people a-tall. Here's the place."

The place had a long mahogany counter. Also a brass footrail—you put one foot on it. Wheeler took two full glasses, and McLeod followed more cautiously.

"Mixing it with water is what ruins the stomach," Dan informed him as he came out. "I hope it doesn't rain."

But it did, so they were driven into the next place—and another. After they had for the fourth time found the brass rail with one foot, Wheeler opined that the weather was fair and warmer, while Mac was inclined to be mellow in respect to his obligations to his companion. He estimated that he still owed Dan two hundred and fifty dollars, and insisted that he must write a check right there on the bar.

Wheeler made the point that business was worse than water when mixed with whisky, and McLeod became seriously pathetic.

"I'd do it for you, Dan," he pleaded almost tearfully. "Come on—be a sport."

"All right, Kelley—don't cry about it," Wheeler said crisply. "I tell you—we'll leave it to the man, here."

He made his appeal to the bartender:

"See here, cap, look this over. Boy here, he's in luck and in love, and it has gone to his head. He thinks he owes me money just because he's got a new check-book. How about it?"

"How much?"

The bar-man wiped the bar, reaching for the bottle with the other hand, and looked at Wheeler keenly.

"No, you don't!"

Dan got the bottle by the neck and poured another as he said:

"He says two-fifty and I say nothing. Your health, professor!"

"Drink hearty! Match for it, double or quits," said the referee briskly, and got the bottle while Dan's elbow intervened.

"I gotcha!"

Wheeler set down the glass, at the same time slapping a silver dollar on the bar and looking at Mac.

"If you match me you can write five-o-o in your little book. If you don't, you put up and shut up—your check-book and your face. Come a-running!"

Mac slapped a coin down. They lifted their hands, and the barkeep craned his fat neck to see.

"Heads—and tails! Teach you to monkey with Sled Wheeler!" Dan triumphed. "We are square—I win two-fifty! The squeal of the sucker is music in my ears! Now—now! Take it like a man—put up your joke-book and come with Dan."

He headed for the door.

"I don't like this man anyhow—he's too fat and stingy!"

The man of drinks took no offense—on the contrary, he was staring at Dan's back with a face subdued and pallid.

"Mr. Wheeler!" he called respectfully. "You left your dollar—you paid for your drinks before."

"Keep it—I'm still two forty-nine to the good," Dan responded, waving a hand without turning his head. "Fee for referee. Mac, I bet you can't say that—fee for referee—Whoa-oa-up! Easy there, stranger!"

He freed himself from the embrace of a red-nosed person of large size, who had come surging through the swinging doors and now blustered:

"Say—where you— Get off my feet!"

The big man stuck out a weak jaw and shook a large hairy fist.

"You need a good one in the jaw. I got a notion to give you——"

"Keep it, neighbor, keep it!" interrupted Dan, swinging one leg out behind him and making a dancing-master bow. "All my fault, general—I apologize. If you got to fight, lick the barkeep!"

And with exaggerated caution he circled behind Mac and hustled him through the door.

The victorious gladiator looked around the bar-room, disappointed that he had no admiring audience, and swaggered to the bar.

"Whisky—Monogram!" he ordered gruffly. "These rah-rah boys make me sick!"

"That lad would have made you sicker if he had gone to you one time," said the barkeep scornfully. "Didn't know you was swellin' up to Sled Wheeler himself, did yuh? Ever hear of him—read the papers? You better go home and get under the bed—or take the pledge!"

The large man's mouth dropped open, and his red nose looked like a big strawberry in a pan of milk. He jerked his head over his shoulder toward the door and turned his pop-eyes on the bartender as he reached for his glass.

"Is that right?"

He set down his empty glass with another furtive glance behind him and announced:

"Now I'm *through*! Hear of Sled Wheeler? Why, I was in Chi, myself, time he downed Smiling Snead. Say!" pausing with one shaky hand in his pocket. "Why didn't y' give me the high-sign? And me without a cent of life-insurance! What'll you take for that cart-wheel? He leave it there? I wan' to keep it f'r luck."

He reached for the dollar, but the barkeep snatched and pocketed it.

"Not so you'd notice it! He gimme it! I own that dollar—and you got all the luck there is, just to be livin'. Take it from me!"

"*That ain't no dream!*" And the red nose aimed for the door. "I'm goin' home and tell the wife I swore off."

He came about, however, and made his exit by the side door on a cross-street.

 OUT on Third Avenue the cause of all this alarm was arguing with a policeman as to the origin of the name Israfil, taking as his point of departure that it did *not* occur in the Bible. The

copper took the stand that it was none of his business, since the man's place of business was not on his beat "anyway." That was a clincher.

"Sure! That lets you out. Why didn't you say so?" said Dan. "These foreigners and the Civil Service Examinations will ruin the force—bad luck to them! Ireland shall be free!"

"Now ye're talkin'!" said the officer, pacing majestically on his beat.

"Where did he get that name, Mac? Haven't you looked it up yet?"

Dan turned on his companion seriously.

"And what's the difference between mesmerism and hypnotism?"

"What's the— Say! You have got your jag, all right," said Mac. "We'd better go to bed before you land in the Tombs."

"Not so, my friend!"

Wheeler was looking at something in the distance as he answered seriously—more seriously:

"I really want to know those two things, and I think that is Tommy on the corner yonder—with news for me. If it is, our jag is adjourned without date. Tell it to me."

McLeod considered:

"All I remember is that Israfil was angel of harmony or music or something, and is in the Koran. Mesmerism—let me see—Mesmer did things with magnets in a tub of water to slow music, while sick folks sat around the tub and held hands until some of them got better and others threw fits. That's mesmerism. Nowadays a crank on a lecture-platform puts a fool to sleep and makes him eat a raw potato, and that's hypnotism."

Wheeler listened intently to the end.

"Hot stuff!" he approved. "Why didn't you say so before? You and the cop! It would have saved us a lot of trouble. Now I know where to get a hold on this thing."

Mac stared in doubt and distress. Either Wheeler was drunk or—

"No—I'm not crazy, nor drunk, nor going to be."

Dan spoke with his natural brisk incisiveness.

"I am beginning to see through this muddle—you will get it presently. But just now I want soda and water, and a chance to talk with Tommy a minute. He's the freckled bell-boy at the Grand Union—father's dead, and has a kid brother; and I picked him up on a hunch, too. You fall

back and scout around outside while I take him in to that corner drug-store."

McLeod obeyed, and saw the boy follow Wheeler at a signal to the drug-store. Wheeler entered alone, spoke to the clerk and disappeared behind the partition, where Tommy was presently allowed to follow him. Mac loitered about outside and attempted to spot a possible spy whom Dan might be avoiding by this performance. The only result was that he was accosted by various fakers and women of the streets.

When Wheeler appeared it was from another direction, having made the circuit of the block, and he sauntered with an air of easy deliberation.

"We have got our hooks in now, Mac. There's a big game playing, and we seem to have landed square in the middle of it—whatever it is!" he said as he walked slowly up-town.

McLeod was frankly disappointed, and said so.

"Lord! I thought you had it all cleared up, and were going to tell me."

"If I could, there'd be nothing to do."

Lowering his voice, Dan went on:

"It looks like the Main Guy—call him Spark Gang, or what-not—wants you out of his way. Or did. There's another frame-up all fixed for tonight—to get you and me caught in a police raid; and we can fall into it or not, thanks to Tommy. Which way will we learn more? We won't get the Main Guy, that's sure, for he's a smooth operator and keeps well out of sight; but we might get a bit more information as to how he does it—and why he's down on you so hard."

"It shows one thing right out—your uncle's necklace must be a winner, worth a lot of money and several lives; or else this is a big spite job—a case of revenge. You must get him to tell you—tell you all he will tell. Think he is cracked—crazy?"

The sudden question startled McLeod; he stammered:

"N-No. I n-n-never thought—d-d-didn't see any signs of it. Why not tell the police—get plain-clothes men to follow us?" he suggested eagerly.

"Then it wouldn't come off. It's been tried several times."

Wheeler smiled his quick half-smile.

"You have to hand it to this gentleman—the Main Guy; he not only knows every bull and dick in town, but he seems wise to all their plans in advance. He's got them

bluffed—buffaloed—hoodooed. This Israfil calls it 'hypnotized.' What do you think?"

"I think you'll have *me* crazy at this rate," said Mac. "You tell me nothing and assume that I know everything. I don't know there is any 'necklace'—I didn't understand half what Huen Ling said the other night; and when I mentioned it you fairly jumped down my throat—scared me stiff. If you want me to be of any use——"

"You are—just as you are now."

Wheeler laid a hand on Mac's shoulder lightly.

"Take it easy! Shall we walk into their trap?" Dan asked abruptly. "Don't think—just decide!"

And McLeod answered on impulse—

"Yes—of course."

And as they set off up Third Avenue he asked:

"What is it this time? Another gang of toughs? Have you got Lem's gun?"

"No—different cast all through. Steve Collins and some of his swell friends—artists," said Dan casually. "I returned Lem's gun, but he may be around himself. He's selling out to his partner."

"Swell friends! In a dirty frame-up?"

"They don't know what it's about. I don't guess even Steve knows. That's why I want to find out how it is worked. Can you stand beer on top of what you've got without getting pie-eyed?" queried Dan, who showed no signs of stimulation at all. "This is a case for clear thinking, I fancy."

"I can always talk straight," Mac boasted, "though I am out of practise."

"I'll watch you," Wheeler promised. "And we'd better keep together tonight."



"THE CHAPEL" looked like its name. Even at this busy hour it had something of a cloistered air, with its dark wainscoting and big timbers overhead. A broad shelf ran round the large room, more than head-high, bearing rows of mugs, steins, pitchers and all kinds of beer-implements. Its high, narrow window-casements were arched, and the glass was stained. About its many tables sat fresh-faced family parties, chatting cozily in guttural German and absorbing the best beer in New York.

As Mac followed Wheeler between the tables, dodging waiters with trays of glasses, he felt the restful comfort of the place and decided there must be some mistake. This

was no atmosphere for the hatching of desperate plots.

"This way, McLeod! Come on, Wheeler! Two chairs just waiting for you."

It was Collins who was calling to them with sudden familiar cordiality. As Dan turned to accompany McLeod he muttered—

"Long-lost-brother act."

With the amateur champion heavyweight were three girls, all attractive and two of them strikingly pretty.

"Ladies—" Collins stood up to introduce the newcomers—"enter the Beauty and the Man-Killer! The handsome one is Beauty McLeod, but don't think he is safe to annoy—he is a bad scrapper. The one with the frozen-marble face is the Man-Eating Tiger known west of the Rockies as Sled Wheeler. Out there they hunt their cyclone-cellar when he is due to make a call, but any lady is perfectly safe. I'll quit before he gets mad!"

"Boys, this is Nan Preston, Bridget McDevitt, Jane Anderson—all dangerous at all times. I will not say any more, for the good reason that nobody is listening to me!"

Which was true.

"You don't really eat the men you kill, do you, Dan?"

It was the languid Spanish-looking Bridget McDevitt who fixed her glorious big eyes on Wheeler as soon as he was seated and before Collins had stopped his introduction. Dan met those beautiful orbs with cool steadiness as he said—

"You are a mighty dangerous piece of mechanism."

"But you didn't answer my question. Do you——"

"I'll eat anything when I am hungry except an Irishman, Bridget."

"Why not an Irishman?"

And Bridget flushed.

"Because I am no cannibal, and I'm Irish myself."

"Hooray! He's made Bridget blush."

Miss Anderson clapped her hands.

"First blood for Dan Wheeler! No man ever made her blush before."

"He got my Irish up—that was all," Bridget said carelessly. "And I am disappointed in him. I expected a giant, and he's not as big as Collins. Could you whip him, Stephen?"

She narrowed her eyes at Collins.

"I see you are dying to get a chance. What has Dan done to you?"

"What did Danny do to him?
He broke his Grecian nose!"

Jane Anderson sang in rich contralto in a parody of a popular song, "What Did Dugan Do to Him?" Then in a lower tone she said to Dan:

"That would break Stephen's heart as well, but I wish somebody would do it. Collins is too much in love with his own fatal beauty."

Jane was red-haired with dark eyes and eyebrows, and her skin was strawberries and cream. She said to Wheeler.

"If you will break Steve's nose so it will put a hump in it you can name your own reward."

"Now that will be all!" declared the queenly Bridget. "We don't want a fight here—both their necks are bristling—and I want to talk to a man of brains."

She turned her batteries on McLeod, but Wheeler said in a low aside to the fascinating Jane—

"I may remind you of that promise, some day."

Which started a curious query as to what reward he would claim, and the sextet was broken up into conversational pairs at once.

Wheeler had been correctly informed. All three girls were of good family—two of them, Jane and Nan, were Virginians studying art and illustrating, while Bridget was already established in her own studio, doing portrait busts. This was the one—this Spanish Bridget McDevitt—who turned her disturbing dark eyes on McLeod with the casual statement:

"I should like to do your head. What do you do?"

"Just at present I am helping Dan."

"And Dan is doing nothing?"

She flashed the most beautiful teeth he had ever seen in a smile that was startlingly pleasant.

"You don't have to work. Don't you want to do something?"

"I am hoping to—t-to be an architect, s-s-some day!" Mac had not told even Mary Mason this, and he flushed as he stammered.

She nodded gravely.

"I think you'll design buildings well—almost as well as you blush, and you do that gorgeously. Do you always blush like that?"

"When I l-like anybody—or want them to like me."

Mac grew pale at his daring and with the realization that he was being faithless to his divinity of that morning. What was the matter with him? Was it true that a man in a certain stage of love-sickness was specially susceptible? Certainly this girl had stirred him up thoroughly.

She was looking at him now, steadily and soberly, as if in doubt. At length she leaned nearer and made his heart skip as she said:

"What is this bet about? It looks queer to me. Why should Steve Collins want me to get you to walk around Gramercy Park with me at midnight? I know I am not supposed to tell, but I rather think you are really clean—are you?"

And as Mac flushed and stammered the girl went on in a low tone:

"Yes—I can see it. Moreover, I think—that you think—that you are in love. Do you?"

This was getting personal, and Mac's face was burning as he answered honestly—

"I d-d-did—this m-m-morning."

Bridget sat back suddenly. Her big, blue-black eyes flashed fire, then she turned them away abruptly.

"Either you are—contemptible, or else—or else that was one of the sweetest things ever said to me. Now what about that trip around the park? It's only a little way from here, and only a block from my studio. I have an idea there is something more than a silly bet behind this thing, but—are you game to take a chance, just for my *beaux yeux*?"

"I certainly am."

McLeod got his power of speech back all at once.

"Shall we start now? I don't want to drink any more beer tonight."

"It is time for me to be in bed—and it's just midnight," Bridget announced to the table at large. "Mr. McLeod will see me home, and be back with you in half an hour."

"I'll bet he isn't!" Collins said loudly. "Or in three-quarters."



McLEOD turned on the big athlete with a flush on his cheeks, but only gave him a keen look before following the girl who was moving toward the side door of the hall. He had expected Wheeler to make some answer to Collins' insinuating speech, but he noted that Dan was

apparently absorbed in his talk with Miss Nan Preston.

Collins had already taken up his chat with the red-haired Jane Anderson. So Mac decided that Collins had not intended to be insulting, and he followed the queenly Bridget into the street, admiring the perfect, unconscious grace of her free stride. The cross-street was empty as far as one could see, and as they fell into step the girl said:

"Do you know why Steve Collins wanted to get you and Dan Wheeler separated to-night? I noticed that you did not look surprised or puzzled when I spoke about a bet and walking around Gramercy Park. Did you know? What *did* you know?"

"Wheeler got wind that something was up—I don't know just what. But I came near being kidnaped by a tough gang the night before last," Mac answered frankly. "So we walked into the trap tonight to see what would happen. It was a trap, then?"

He noticed that Bridget listened with intent interest.

"Not the same sort of trap—or by the same trapper," she said, apparently in deep thought. "I haven't time to tell you all I know about this, but I think I can trust you this far. I have done some work secretly for a private detective agency that is at work now on the diamond robberies. You have read of the Spark Gang crimes."

"Just what the papers have published—no more," Mac answered.

"Then Wheeler is not working on it? You said you——"

"I think he has decided to go after the Main Guy on his own account," Mac interrupted. "And I did hear something about some papers missing——"

He was stopped by a hand on his sleeve, and the girl said quickly:

"Not quite so loud! They are very important, those papers, and the different agencies at work ought to work together. Since you are with Wheeler I can tell you that tonight's 'trap' is only for the purpose of getting a private interview with your friend Dan.

"It is not you they are after—and all they want is a chance to talk to him when nobody knows even that the talk is taking place. The reason is that the Main Guy you speak of is a marvel—he seems to know every move made to catch him, and to know it before it is made. Understand?"

"Y-yes."

Mac hesitated.

"But who is 'they'?" he asked. "Who wants to talk to Wheeler?"

"The Central Office and the Green Detective Agency—all the other people who are working on the same case," she told him. "You need not worry about that. What has got me guessing is, who tried to get you night before last? Did you find out?"

In her absorption she had stopped short to face McLeod, and they stood still while he told her briefly of the Matty episode and how little Wheeler had found out by his interview with the gangster.

"What did he do then?"

"We went to Huen Ling's, and I was so dead tired I went to sleep before the talk was over," Mac confessed with shame.

"No wonder. But will you tell me what you remember of it."

The sympathy in her rich voice was very delightful, and as they walked on Mac found that their shoulders interlocked and fitted nicely. He recalled the words of the Chinese merchant perfectly up to the point where he had fallen asleep.

Their effect on Bridget was quite the opposite. She seemed to stiffen, and stopped to scan the street for possible eavesdroppers as she said:

"I knew it was a mistake to work separately. Yet—you say Wheeler refused to work with the Central Office—with Brine?"

"Yes; Wheeler said there was a leak somewhere—that somebody in the office was a traitor."

"I see it now—I wish I hadn't asked you to come with me!"

With a face suddenly pale the girl looked up and down the street as if for a place to hide. They were in a lonely spot within view of the quiet park itself, and abruptly the girl drew McLeod under the deep shadow of an awning. There she spoke in a whisper:

"We can see from here. Listen! Didn't it occur to you that you had a special interest in this Spark Gang, or they in you? You noticed that Wheeler spoke of you and your uncle in that connection?"

"I didn't see the connection," said Mac. "What are you looking for?"

"I don't know exactly, but you are in danger still, and this is too good a chance to lose—for them to lose. Did your uncle tell you anything about a——"

She paused to listen, and Mac finished:

"About a necklace? No, he did not."

"Then how did you know it was a necklace?"

She flashed round toward him.

"There they go now!" she exclaimed.

Without waiting for his answer she took his arm and hurried him toward the end of the street, where a couple had just crossed and disappeared on Lexington Avenue.

"That was your friend Dan, seeing Nan home," said the girl hurriedly. "We are on their street and they on ours. This street is the way Wheeler would naturally go after leaving her, but I don't see anybody looking for him. Something has gone wrong—let's hurry!"

And she set a pace that soon had McLeod panting—athlete though he was—making a round of the small block. She still had breath to tell him:

"Somebody besides the Central Office and the Green Agency is taking a hand in this—but why isn't there a carriage loafing along here? There! Two men are following us afoot! This way!"

She turned a corner, pulling Mac by the hand, and dragged him into a dark doorway as she whispered—

"Don't breathe!"

He tried to hold his breath—to gasp noiselessly—and he felt the girl's deep, quiet breathing beside him as two figures dodged past in the shadows on the opposite sidewalk, then vanished behind stone steps.

"Look!" gasped his companion.

"There comes Wheeler, out of the house where he left Nan, and there are *three* men shadowing him—another blunder! They've got him! Wh-what did he do?"

She seized Mac's arm excitedly and stepped out of the shadow.

For a sudden bunching of four dark figures, half-way up the block, had been followed by a breaking-up just as sudden. One man had thrown a forward somersault and crawled away; another dropped and rolled off the curb, while a third limped rapidly across the street. This left Wheeler alone, and he darted after the last of the three just as Bridget hurried Mac farther up-street.

"He has spotted the Chief himself—*what* a mess! Come up to my studio—we may get together yet."

As she inserted her latch-key in a front door she said admiringly:

"I wish we had been nearer. I have never

seen a real expert at ju-jutsu, and I hear he is a master. Somebody has been here!"

She had stepped inside the hall and flashed on the light. It was instantly turned off again, and Mac found himself struggling in the dark. A blow from behind stunned him.



"IT'S only a scratch!" were the first words Mac heard as he came to.

His head ached, and there was a smarting at his side. He felt somebody at work on his body as the voice went on:

"Hardly skin deep, and all it needs is a strip of plaster. Thanks—that will do. He certainly has you to thank for saving his life, Miss McDevitt. There is no doubt about it—it was an attempt to murder him. Did you see anything that would identify the man?"

Mac's eyes wandered about the large studio. He was lying on a couch with Wheeler on one side of him and a thick-set, comfortable-looking man on the other. Bridget sat in an arm-chair, pale and wide-eyed, as she answered:

"No. I held his arm and screamed—he got away when he heard you coming. I think he hit me on the head; and it was all in the dark—everything was so mixed-up and confused, and I thought you'd never come. Who could it have been, and what was the reason for it?"

"There's no doubt about the confusion."

The thick-set man smiled good-naturedly at Wheeler.

"Mr. Wheeler here came near crippling two of my best men in a street-fight when all we wanted was a quiet chat, and at the same time a murderous assault was going on within a few doors of us. Of course there was not a roundsman in sight, and our man has got away. We can only guess who it was or what his motive. What's your idea, Mr. Wheeler?"

"My idea," said Dan caustically, "is that it's no way to approach a man for a friendly talk to jump him in the dark. If you hadn't called out when you did, you would have gone on crutches a while, Mr. William J. Brine."

"No doubt about that. It was a fool performance, trying to kidnap you without making any noise."

The august Chief was very humble about it.

"But I did want a few words with you face to face."

"Well, here we are," said Dan. "How do you feel, Mac? Head ache?"

"Not much—just sore. I'm all right, and I owe it to Miss McDevitt."

Mac looked up gratefully. Bridget was putting a wet towel on his head.

"Keep still! I got you into it—the least I can do is to help you out."

She lightly stroked back his hair and sat down, unashamed, to mother him. Dan turned to Brine soberly.

"What is there to say that hasn't been said? I am not going to give away any facts I may dig up—not to the Central Office, because there is a leak there, as I told you. I am going to keep what I know to myself and go after this crook on my own. I'll tell you right now that you'll have to change your methods or I'll beat you to it!"

"Go ahead! And good luck to you!" said Brine. "But you have no objection to hearing some facts that I can tell you? It can do no harm and may save us both a lot of trouble."

And as Dan did not respond—

"Have you?"

"You didn't ask a question. I'm listening," Wheeler said carelessly.

"Did you know that this man Israfil is the only one who has really given us any hard facts on the Spark Gang problem? We have laughed at some of his statements, but so far every one of them has been proved correct."

Brine paused for reply.

"I'm still listening," Wheeler stated.

"Do you know why the Secretary is in New York?"

"Yes."

Wheeler's prompt affirmative made the Chief blink.

"You do? How about your friend?" with a look toward Mac.

"He knows."

"Then I don't know that I can tell you any news," Brine said slowly, "except that these attempts on your friend here——"

"—mean that the Spark Gang crook is going after the McLeod necklace next," Dan interrupted, "and he wants Mac out of the way. But he won't make another try at it."

The Chief sat staring in silence for some time before he asked—

"Is that a guess?"

"Call it what you like. It goes," Wheeler

said carelessly. "You make a note of it for reference."

"Do you know where it is—the necklace?" Brine asked, leaning forward.

"No. Neither does the Main Guy, nor you," said Dan grimly. "As soon as you find out where it is, this crook you are hunting will know, and he'll go after it—he may get it."

"Hm! May I ask where you get your information?"

"You may."

"Where?"

A silence.

"Well?"

"Well, you have asked. I didn't say I'd answer," said Dan. "Perhaps I got it from Israfil—the man who told you there wasn't any Spark Gang, only one crook using out-of-town yeggs to do his dirty work. Maybe I got it from the man who told you where to get me tonight—and gave you the wrong number. You're a detective—find out."

"I see you have inside dope from somewhere. It is true I did not intend to attack you in that way. I see no profit in any more talk, as long as you hold your present attitude. You may have reason to change your mind and your tactics before we are through. This is no child's play."

"No; it looked more like horse-play tonight," said Dan. "When I change my mind I'll let you know. Good night!"

"Good night."

When the inspector had gone, Mac was the first to speak.

"That was a mighty stiff way to talk to the Chief. Why do you hate him?"

"I don't. I want him to hate the sight of me."

And Dan's green eyes narrowed.

"Oh-h! Pretty!" Bridget breathed softly, with her big eyes wide and fixed on Dan's cold, aggressive face.

Wheeler did not look embarrassed, but he turned on her sharply.

"You think you see something. What is it?" he asked.

"You want it to get noised about that you are not on good terms with the Central Office, and that Brine and you are hostile. Are you planning an 'inside job'?"

Wheeler looked at McLeod, then at Bridget, and asked:

"You know what I said when I first saw you tonight? Well, that goes."

He turned to Mac.

"Well, son, we may as well be going."

He went to the door and there turned.

"You are sure you didn't see anything of the man who tried to knife Mac?"

"I am not sure of anything—perfectly."

Bridget followed to whisper:

"But I have an impression that I got a glimpse of the hand that held the knife, and that it was tattooed on the back. Don't pass it along."

"Thanks—I won't. Good night."

Wheeler was out on the stairs.

"May I call—some time?"

Mac lingered in the doorway and held out his hand.

"Yes—four to five. Good night!"

And she took his hand for a quick, warm pressure. Mac could not help bending over it and raising it to his lips. The hand, cool, velvet, elastic, did not yield at first—then with a sudden impulse it was pressed to his lips with gentle force and withdrawn, and the door closed softly behind him.

He ran after Dan, startled and puzzled at his own action. Was he the sort of soft sentimentalist that fell in love with every attractive girl who looked at and flattered him? What had impelled him to kiss Bridget's hand? He hadn't intended to do it the instant before it happened.

"An awful deadly piece of mechanism!" Wheeler said as Mac came abreast with him on the sidewalk, and McLeod was startled at this new bit of mind-reading.

"What did you mean by that?" Mac asked.

"Just what I said. She is one of the kind that can handle any man who has a drop of red blood in him, and her brains work overtime. I want to see her some more."

"Did you ask her if you might call?"

"No, but I am going to do it without asking," said Dan. "Now you'd better go to bed. Next time when I say, 'Keep together' you might as well remember it. That pair tonight were after your scalp, right!"

"Aren't we going to do anything more about it?" Mac responded. "This is the second time, and nothing but luck saved me. Are you just going to quit, and take it lying down?"



NOW that he was no longer under the tension of fright, McLeod began to feel some effect from the mixed drinks he had taken. He had rounded on Dan with a good deal of heat, and now stood waiting for an answer.

Wheeler, after one quick glance into McLeod's eyes, stood looking down the silent street. His cold, aggressive face looked bleak and bitter, and for some seconds he said no word, while Mac already felt that he had been unreasonable and spiteful.

"Luck or not, you are not hurt."

Wheeler's voice had the rather husky tone that went with strong self-control.

"What would *you* do about it?" he asked.

"I know what I *can* do—report it to the police," retorted Mac; "and—money will hire a private detective to act as body-guard. I don't see any fun in acting as a target for all the yeggs in New York."

Here Mac was struck silent by the sardonic look in Dan's face as he slowly turned toward him. The thin lips curled before they opened.

"Brine would be delighted to have you make a holler, and the Main Guy of the Spark Gang would take for the woods if he knew you had set the uniform bulls on his trail. Listen to me! William J. Brine is supposed to be pretty good in his line. I wouldn't tell him how to work, not after the way I talked to him tonight.

"Now I am going to talk straight talk. You have lost your nerve, and your mixed drinks are working. I know what I am doing, and if you butt in you'll last so quick you'll never know what hit you."

"This is a tough mouthful I have bit off this time, but I am going to give it a whirl my own way—before I quit. You can bet on that!"

"Now you have been talking because you got a scare. You have no plan—you don't know what you are up against; just making a noise with your mouth like a frightened cur. It's time you were in bed—hep up!"

Wheeler turned to go, but McLeod stood with hands clenched.

"That's all I will stand—I wouldn't take it from anybody else," he began hoarsely. "I'll send you a check in the morning, but you won't see me in that room—that—room——"

Here Mac found his voice trailing off, and forgot what he was going to say. Wheeler had faced him, standing with his back to the light so that his features were in shadow, and for an instant McLeod fancied that two green rays came from Dan's eyes toward him. He was dully surprised that the rays pointed toward his stomach instead of his face and caused a numbness where they

struck. And Dan was speaking—quietly but with authority:

"Mixed drinks, Mac. Bed for yours. 'Bout face! Drill!"

And somehow Mac found himself walking up-town, keeping step with Wheeler, who looked straight ahead with a face as unchangeable and cold as that of the Sphinx. He heard himself muttering something about the "last time," but as he walked he began to cool off and to feel a bit dizzy. Wheeler spoke only once on the way, and then he said—

"You'll be sick, I shouldn't wonder."

Before the hotel Mac stopped. He had decided to apologize.

"Dan," he began, "I made a fool of myself aga——"

"You are green around the mouth now," Dan interrupted. "Get up-stairs and lie down while I get soda and water. I'll fix you up."

"—fool of myself again, just the same," persisted Mac, weaving a little as he stepped up two inches too high for the door-sill. "And I got to say I am sorry I said it. What you grinning at?"

"You looked just like John T. around the mouth then," said Dan. "Be sure you get the right room—middle door-knob, remember. I'll be right up with the soda."

And he saw Mac to the foot of the stairs before going in search of his prescribed remedy.

Mac had a bad half-hour, but Wheeler cared for him with the skill of a nurse and the sympathy of a mother. The dose he administered seemed to Mac to make him worse, but inside an hour he was at peace inside and out—aloft and alow.

"You're a wonder, Dan!" he said weakly. "You must go with me to see Uncle Alan in the morning."

"We'll see," was all the promise Dan made as he put a cold cloth on Mac's head. "Go to sleep."

Mac obeyed, but waked within an hour to see the light still burning in the room between the two bedrooms. He got up and looked out, to see Dan pacing the floor, still dressed, and holding a hot steaming towel to his face.

"You sick, too?" Mac asked. "What is it?"

"Neuralgia," growled Dan through set teeth. "Had it twice or three times since I got that jaw broken. Alcohol and cold wind, I suppose."

The lines around his mouth and eyes showed the intensity of his suffering.

"I'll get a doctor."

Mac proceeded to get into his clothes.

"No—I don't want any dope!" Dan objected distinctly. "It takes enough to kill a horse to affect me, and I'm sicker the next day. The only thing that ever stopped it is massage and Turkish bath; but the masseur has to know how."

"Take you to Carlson's then," Mac insisted; and he did it, after some half-hearted opposition on Wheeler's part.

For Dan was distracted and almost insane with the pain. McLeod made him wrap his face warmly, had a closed carriage called, and took him down-town to Carlson's place. Here he had to bribe all the attendants from door-man to furnace-man to get what he wanted, but he kept at it with good-natured persistence.

He watched every step in the treatment, from the warm bath to the steam-room, the general body-massage and the special manipulation of the face and scalp, and had the reward of seeing Dan go to sleep on the table. Then he had him put to bed in a private room, where he slept beside him until morning.

This incident was not of much importance as such things commonly go; but it had a profound effect on Wheeler, who was not used to being coddled. When he awoke in the morning McLeod was still asleep, and Dan did not stir or make a noise until at last Mac opened his eyes of his own accord and sat up.

"Hello!"

Mac blinked and sat up.

"How long have you been awake? How's the face now?"

"All right, only a little sore," Dan said gruffly, and got up. "I want a drink of water."

He went after it without commenting on the fact that he had suffered an hour of raging thirst rather than wake Mac up. When he came back from the bathroom he started dressing with the brief charge—

"Better be moving if you are to be up there at ten," referring to Mac's appointment with his uncle; and he added: "If you say so, I'll go with you some time, but I have a date at ten today. You won't lose by it, just the same."

"What do you mean—lose?" Mac was genuinely puzzled.

"Mean? Nothing, much."

Wheeler's lips gave one of his peculiar twists, and at first Mac thought he was bitter about something. Then Dan added grimly:

"Inquire around! See if you can find a man who did a good turn for Dan Wheeler and got the worst of it!"

And before McLeod could speak he added—

"It's after nine now."

And he disappeared to turn on the water in the tub.

VI

 LATE that afternoon McLeod was pacing the floor of the hotel reading-room and watching for Wheeler when he entered. Dan saw Mac coming toward him with a look of both anxiety and relief, and with a silent pressure of his lips he signaled for silence. When he had steered Mac to an empty corner and got him seated, so that he could watch the room himself, Wheeler said evenly:

"Simmer down and count ten before you begin. Now then—shoot!"

"I don't know where to begin; there is so much to tell—and some of it so hard to believe——"

Mac's eyes began to dilate, and Dan raised a graceful hand.

"Don't try to tell but one thing at a time. Go slow, and begin where you left me this morning. We've got all the time there is."

"Well—I went straight to my uncle's after I had some coffee and rolls. I found my uncle in bed, to save his strength for talking, and he said he had a lot to tell me today. He looked rather— Dan, I am not sure he is in his right mind! I might as well say it straight out."

"What did he tell you?"

"The first thing he asked was whether I had been attacked or not, and by whom. He wanted all the details, and he got them by sharp questions. Then he told me about the necklace and what he had done about it."

Mac finished with a worried frown—

"That is what sounds queer—makes me think he is queer."

"Yeh—you know the old Quaker!" said Dan. "Shake 'er up!"

"Don't hurry me if you want a straight story. I am all a-shiver as it is."

Mac showed his intense excitement by

the dilation of his pupils until his eyes were all black. He suddenly paused in his story to ask—

"How much can a diamond necklace be worth—in money?"

"Anything that some rich fool will pay for it," Wheeler said promptly. "Never mind that. He told you about his?" with a look about the lobby.

"In a way he did. Yes. He said he had put almost all his money and some of his ward's into it—into the stones to make up this one necklace."

"How could he do that? There must be a—" Wheeler was objecting when Mac put in:

"Judge Martin looks after that—whatever they call it—and my uncle gave a mortgage on the Fifth Avenue property to raise the money and to secure her. So he says that all he owns is in the necklace, some unset stones and a small balance in the bank. He said he had to sell some of the single stones at once—Huen Ling would see to it—to pay running-expenses. All that was straight enough. It was what he said about the necklace that was queer."

Wheeler opened his mouth, shut it with an effort and waited patiently. The result was to speed Mac up greatly.

"I know—I'm coming to it. He seems to think the whole world and his wife is planning to steal that necklace. He has put so much time and thought and money into it that he is hipped on the subject, I suppose. He says an attempt was made in London, another in Paris and one in Hamburg to steal the unfinished necklace—and that the complete necklace is worth twice what it cost to get the stones together, and to get them matched and set. Is that true? And do you believe that about the—that they did try to steal it? How would they know about it?"

"That's easy," said Dan. "All the big gons know about it by now. And if it had been on exhibition ever the police of every big city would have a description of every stone in it."

"But it hasn't," Mac objected. "Some of the stones have never been seen except by the cutter and my uncle. How could it be so fa——"

"Use your brains!" Dan broke out impatiently. "Can't you see that big diamonds that have not been described nor listed are just the best things in the world to

steal? With that necklace in his pocket a man would own the world. Nothing crazy about that—go ahead!”

“Here’s the point.”

Mac leaned forward to whisper:

“He thinks the man who runs the so-called Spark Gang is the same foreign crook who tried to rob him before, and that this same big crook has got a pull in New York that makes him safe—so that he can steal the necklace and get away with it. He says that this man—he called him by name—will get that necklace and be gone with it within twenty-four hours after he finds out where it is. That is all he is waiting for——”

“One minute!”

Dan laid a hand on Mac’s knee and spoke in a still lower whisper.

“What is the name?”

“Nobody I ever heard of. Bo—Boo—something.”

“Jean Bouvais! Was that it?” Wheeler hissed suddenly.

“Ouch! Yes, I guess so. Sounded like that—Don’t amputate that leg!”

“Don’t you *know*? Think!” Dan insisted savagely.

“Ye-yes! I know it was. Let *go*! I never saw such fingers!”

“I beg your pardon—rub it!”

With that unnecessary advice Wheeler sat staring at nothing with eyes narrowed to pin-point pupils. Abruptly he roused himself.

“That all the reason you have for thinking your uncle crazy?”

“No, but just think of it! A necklace worth a kingdom, hidden because the owner is sure it will be stolen out of any safe-deposit vault. He won’t even have it guarded—he says the man who knows where it is would not live two days, so he won’t tell me where it is or how to find it. What’s the sense in that?”

“Well, it hasn’t been stolen so far,” said Wheeler absently. “Maybe he is right. What will happen if he dies suddenly?”

This started Mac off again.

“He spoke of that—said he had provided for that, and that I need not worry because I would be provided for. He made me promise not to tell what I was to do in case of his death, but it is something of no sense or meaning.

“What I want to know is—what are we going to do about it *now*? I don’t relish this

game of dodging thugs—and nobody seems to do anything to stop it.”

Mac finished with some bitterness:

“My uncle says he knows how to fix it. He wants to send word to this mysterious crook that I don’t know anything about the hiding-place of the diamonds, and then I shall be let alone. And that is the craziest idea of all! It’s impossibly silly. I am beginning to feel insane myself, listening to all this stuff. Why not just inform the police?”

“There you go again. I told you this Main Guy—and there is one, never doubt it—has got a man inside the police lines. The last two robberies came off on the very day that the jewels were deposited and a special guard posted to watch them. Ask McGuire; he was there himself, and swears nobody got near the safe-deposit box, but the jewels vanished. Same with Israfil’s diamonds.”

Wheeler was talking in a low murmur, as if his thoughts were elsewhere, and all at once he seemed to come to a decision.

“Mac, it’s time to stop figuring and get action! Just plain common sense is all we need; and your uncle is dead right—we are going to show this gentleman something that will make him let you alone. Let’s stir it up a little thicker!”

“But you don’t know who or where he is! What’s the sense?”

“Don’t I? H’m!” said Dan.

“Do you?”

Mac was suddenly excited.

“Easy, son! I will lay even money I can cover him with three guesses—three! So we’ll just make sure we put those three wise—we’ll show ‘em! Come on!”

“Where?”

Mac got up hopefully.

“To Israfil’s—he seems to have a line on this thing. No, I am not saying he is the Main Guy himself, but he seems to be ‘getting warm’ in this hunt. It is just another hunch of mine.”

Dan was on his way to the street.



THE house occupied by the “Mysterious Israfil” was on the same street with Carlson’s Sanitarium, and with the building that housed the Russian Consular Offices. As they drove past these places Wheeler said with a tilt of his head toward them:

“Getting warm, Mac—can’t you feel it? Something is going to happen some day in

this neighborhood. And here is Israfil's—he's got swell rooms, and all kinds of big people consult him on the sly. The place looks it; what?"

It was a dark and quiet house, and in one of the broad plate-glass windows was a modest professional sign of ground-glass—

**ISRAFIL
ADVICE**

A card on the door bore the inscription—

Hours, 10-2

It was late afternoon, but the boy who answered the door seemed to know Dan, and showed them at once into the consulting-room at the rear. It was a square room without windows, hung all round with black velvet curtains and lighted only by a diffused glow from the ceiling—a novelty in those days—which threw into strong relief the only objects it contained.

There was nothing in sight but a round table, covered with dull black cloth and bearing a large crystal sphere, and surrounded by four tall chairs. From one of these chairs Israfil rose at their entrance. He appeared to have been resting after office-hours. He wore a long robe of white—lustrous white—velvet, which made him seem even taller than his six feet. His face was white except for a pointed black beard, clipped close on the cheeks to show a broad jaw, and his eyes were a light gray—almost white.

The effect as he stood behind the sphere of crystal was symmetrical and striking—a figure in black and white that seemed to dominate and pervade the room, and that was repeated in a reversed image in the glass sphere before him.

He stood in watchful silence, waiting for his visitors to speak first. But Wheeler was not to be drawn to commit himself, and he waited out his host.

"What can I do for you, gentlemen?" suavely asked the charlatan.

And he added hurriedly:

"Mr. Wheeler and his friend are welcome. I was hoping this was an informal call. Please be seated."

"Mac and I came to tell you something and to get some advice," said Dan, taking a chair and crossing his legs easily. "You know who he is, of course—it's your business to know everything—and his uncle,

Alan McLeod. Is Alan McLeod insane or not?"

The question came with startling suddenness.

Israfil sat down slowly and slowly answered:

"Any man who is not commonplace and dull is called insane at some time. Alan McLeod has made money from his knowledge of diamonds. He has found some wonderful stones, and so far he has lost none by theft. What is there about him to arouse a suspicion of his sanity?"

It was Wheeler again who spoke:

"His uncle wants Mac to make it known that he—young McLeod, here—doesn't know where the McLeod necklace is concealed. Then the boy won't be bothered any more by attempts to kidnap or to kill him. But Mac says it's a crazy notion, because nobody knows who is behind the two attacks made on him—except that his uncle has a notion it is the Spark Gang leader. What's your advice on the question?"

"Have you given me all the important facts in the case?" Israfil asked with a narrowing of his light-gray eyes. "It sounds very incomplete."

"Then I'll add another on my own hook," Dan said crisply. "I can tell the crook who is doing it—whoever he is—that he's barking at a knot when he tries to get Mac. See? Moreover, if he tries it one more time I shall get him—as sure as my name is Dan Wheeler!"

And he finished with a level-eyed stare into the face across the table, while Israfil watched with his whitish eyes wider open. Before the clairvoyant had quite regained his superior dignity, Dan added in a low level voice—

"He may not know what that means—my promise—but I'd advise him to ask about my record right off—and watch—me!"

And again Israfil seemed jolted out of his composure by Wheeler's tawny, fierce glare. He looked away in a moment, turning his gaze on the crystal, and asked slowly:

"You want my advice as to how to reach this criminal—how to let him know the things you have told me? I can look in the sphere if you like and tell you what I see."

Wheeler leaned forward and compelled the light-gray eyes to come back to his own. Then he said:

"No. Just look at me, and tell me what you think!"

"I—do not—think—" Israfil began hesitantly and with a slight foreign-sounding accent—"that your friend will be—again—at-tacked."

"That's nice!" said Wheeler cheerfully. "You think I won't need to put it in the papers—or anything like that?"

"I should say not. You have a strong odic force, and I think the man whom Alan McLeod fears must have unusual powers of clairvoyance himself, so your purpose alone will deter him."

Israfil was trying to become oracular again.

"Yeh!" Dan assented dryly. "But just in case he doesn't pick the message off the wires, I expect to stage a little show for him. Maybe I'll do it tonight. I want to leave no doubt that I mean what I say, or that it is safe to play horse with me."

"It might be well."

Israfil spoke this time with a hard metallic note.

"But—may I ask the nature of the demonstration? Smoke, gentlemen?"

From inside his gown he produced and offered his cigaret-case. Both refused.

"No, thanks. I am not sure, myself," said Wheeler. "But it will be something he will be apt to hear about, if he doesn't see it, and something *he will not forget*. I may do a stunt in hypnotism—I have put men to sleep before now. Of course I don't claim to be such a powerful operator as you are."

"I should say you would be an excellent operator," Israfil said gravely. "Was there anything else? No? Then let me say I wish you success in your thief-hunt. I hope my diamonds will be recovered when you get him."

He rose, and his visitors with him.

"We'll get him—and the stones. Good night!" and left the room.

The good nights were repeated by McLeod and his host—the only words Mac had spoken in the house—and Mac waited until the boy had bowed them out before speaking. On the sidewalk he said softly:

"Do you suspect him of being the head crook—the Main Guy? Israfil himself?"

"Israfil? Why, he was with McGuire—on the watch as a special deputy when one of the biggest jobs was pulled off. He's got an alibi—copper-riveted. But I want to make an impression on him," Wheeler said

cheerily. "He is close to the headquarters of these jobs, and so is Carlson here!"

They were passing the sanitarium of the masseur as he spoke, and Dan drew close to Mac and whispered:

"That girl said something about a tattooed hand on the man who tried to knife you. Well, Carlson's assistant has a tattooed hand!"

"You saw it last night? But it was only last night that it happened! How could it be the same man?"

Mac was again dazed and confused.

"And what motive could this man have for attacking me?"

"Time enough and motive enough, if he were either bought or hypnotized," Dan said simply. "And that last is Israfil's theory, publicly announced—that the Main Guy works by hypnotism."

"That's an old fallacy—exploded a dozen times. Nonsense!" Mac sniffed.

"All right. L'ave 'er go 't that!" said Wheeler lightly. "We don't have to bother with theories—stick to facts and action. I got a date for dinner tonight—with Huen Ling—so you better look up some of your college friends. Seen Piet and Reggie lately? They're clever boys when Reggie is sober."

Dan smiled as he advised:

"Go find some of them to play with, and be sure to bring them to Hawley's tonight after theater-hours. Don't forget!"

"I won't. What are you going to do?"

At once McLeod was alert. But he got no satisfaction out of Wheeler, who seemed to be hatching some devilment; for in his long, tiger eyes a light was dancing as he answered:

"I don't know, I tell you. But something has got to be done or I'll blow off a cylinder-head. Tonight is the night for Happenings. Come around to Hawley's and we'll try to dig up something. We part here. So long until eleven!"

They went their separate ways—Dan down-town, and McLeod up as far as the hotel, where he ate in lonely state. Then he proceeded to hunt in vain for amusement or companionship. Piet was not to be found; he did not want to sit alone in a theater, and he did not feel like trying to see Mary Mason, because she had not been at home earlier in the day. He was rather disgruntled and inclined to hold the universe responsible for his depression.



IN A mood of perverse bravado he took a lonely walk through dark and deserted streets, just to see if anything would happen, telling himself at intervals that another kidnaping party or assault would be better than such neglect. He began to doubt the evidence of his senses and his memories of the last two days, as he reviewed what had happened to him. It didn't stand to reason that it was all true—he must have dreamed some of it, or else it was a joke that was being played on him.

This Israfil was impossible, too, right on the face of him. As extravagant and irrational as the McLeod necklace, and its owner's fear of the Main Guy whom he called Bouvais.

It was all fanciful and unnatural, like a wild, sensational story—No! A story would have to hang together better. It was only in real life that so much outside stuff and useless material got crowded in.

Huen Ling, too, was very real and very solid. There must be truth in what he had said. The rich merchant believed that there was a melodramatic "paper" of international importance mixed up in this matter of the Spark Gang crimes. He would not be easily fooled by a fanciful story.

So Mac swung from one side to the other without coming to any conclusion. He kept looking at his watch impatiently, waiting for the time when he was to go to Hawley's gambling-house and trying to guess what Wheeler had in mind for the evening. Dan had said nothing more definite than that he was going to "show them something" that would open their eyes and cause them to "lay off" his friend McLeod. By "them" he meant the Spark Gang or its leader, whom he believed to be the one behind the attacks on McLeod.

Mac, therefore, was more interested and curious with every minute of suspense. He decided to wait until eleven o'clock before going to Hawley's, for the after-theater crowd could not be expected before that time.

At five minutes before the hour he was crossing Union Square, when he overtook Piet Van Twiller and Reggie Willing.

"Hello, Mac! Where going? You met Reggie."

"Glad to meet him again. I have been looking for you fellows."

Mac smiled with genuine pleasure.

"I had started for Hawley's," he added.

"Same here—and ditto."

Reggie shook hands vigorously.

"I don't wander around with a singing souse on more than once a month—lunar month, y'know. The other night I had been refused again. She throws me down every full moon. This is going to be a big night at Hawley's."

"You missed the biggest night yet—when your friend Dan showed Slugging Steve that ju-jutsu trick. Steve bites himself every time he remembers it. He wants all the limelights himself," Piet said with his slow, husky drawl. "I wish he could get one gilt-edged trimming. He's swelled up worse than a poisoned pup."

"Trouble with us is," Reggie put in, "you see before you a pair of also-rans. Steve is rushing Miss Mason off her feet—gives her no chance to breathe. He rides with her, sails with her, smothers her with flowers and dazzles her with his manly strength and beauty. He's no worse than some of the rest of us, but he's not fit for her; and I'm afraid he's got her going. He is one handsome big — with a sure-death wallop—you can't dodge that! What to do?"

"That's the question," said Piet dolefully. "Just got to let him hang himself in his own room, I guess. She'll get wise to him in time."

"Then it'll be too late—when they're married," said Piet. "He'd beat her up and make her like it. It makes me sick!"

"Amen!" said the other twain solemnly.

Then Reggie had an idea.

"Why not conspire? We three ought to dope out something to stop him."

And he added hastily:

"Nothing dirty, you know—something subtle and Machiavellian, like knocking his block off with a ball-bat. What?"

"You can have the job, Reggie," Piet conceded; "I couldn't do it if he were tied and chloroformed, and it wouldn't help matters to get a big licking. I'd get knocked stiff if it would do any good, but—There's an idea for you! Maybe it would, eh? Martyr act—show up the big brute! What?"

"Not in a thousand years," Reggie pronounced. "He never'd fall for it. He's no fool, if he does act like it at times. If you tried it he'd take you across his knee and paddle you good. That would read well in the headlines; oh, yes!"

"He's a real fighter; got to give him that," sighed Piet. "They say he'd give the professional champion a good time if he'd train."

But he travels with a shady bunch on the quiet, and I hate to see him with a nice girl. What was this I heard about last night?"

He turned to Mac.

"Did he ring you into a mix-up?"

"Not intentionally, I think," said Mac honestly. "Somebody used him—or tried to. It came out all right, but I shouldn't wonder if Wheeler had something to say to him about it. He's going to be at Hawley's—must be there now."

"Shake it up, then! We may be missing something."

Piet put on more speed.

"Collins is sure to be there too, and he's sore—looking for bother."



HAWLEY'S was the original "Art Gallery," since widely imitated, and the rooms were not only luxurious but beautifully furnished and decorated. Only well-known sportsmen, or those vouched for by such, were admitted, and the place was never raided. In fact many leading citizens frequented and admired the house—were rather proud of it as one of New York's claims to superiority.

When they entered the large roulette-room on the second floor, Mac and his two friends found the game going strong. Wheeler and Collins were both playing—Wheeler winning and Collins losing—and the latter was grumbling ill-naturedly to anybody who would listen.

"Red again!" he growled. "And I just switched. I can break up any run by getting aboard. I'd double again, but the limit stops me."

"We'll take off the limit if you want to play a real game," said "Redney" at the wheel. "You haven't lost as much as Wheeler did last time, and he never made a peep. He's ahead of the game now."

"Oh, of course! The Western wonder!" sneered Collins. "Nothing else in sight these days. You'd think he was the only gun-fighter that ever came to New York."

Collins either did not see Wheeler, at the far end of the table beyond the wheel, or else he intended to start something. At the moment there was a knot of young men around Wheeler and the man who had come in with him a few minutes before. From this group Wheeler turned to face the table, and across its length he called to Collins—

"Who told you I was a gun-fighter, Collins?"

Redney held the ball in his hand, and stayed his educated third finger that was about to twirl the wheel. Every face about the long table turned from one to the other of the two men who stood at each end, their eyes meeting in antagonism and challenge. Never did two finer specimens of virile manhood face each other. Wheeler, though not so big in body, made the more striking figure with his perfectly unconscious grace and the keen, predatory power of his clean-cut features. Collins came nearer the perfection of a Greek statue and with his rich coloring was the embodiment of ideal manly beauty. As Dan's question stopped all noise in the room Collins smiled a superior smile with his response:

"It is common report. Are you ashamed of it? Or do you pride yourself on these Japanese tricks you showed us the other night?"

A smile went round the table. Wheeler did not smile; neither did he show vicious temper as he said gravely:

"They are not so easy or harmless as they look—those same 'tricks.' I am not bragging when I tell you I could have broken your neck as easily as we broke the chair. But I used to push the mitts a bit—ask the man who taught me all I knew with them!"

With a slight tilt of his head at the handsome man beside him, who had been talking with Dan just before Collins spoke, and who now faced about.

Several onlookers nudged their neighbors and whispered—

"It's Murphy—the Nonpareil himself!" as they saw the face on the then world champion middle-weight, the original "Gentleman Jack."

Every man in the room knew Murphy's various superlative titles, and knew that he deserved every one. Moreover, he had been one of Collins' teachers. He nodded to his big pupil pleasantly:

"It is true, Collins. Dan was a boy wonder."

The crowd had fallen silent to hear Murphy's low, modest voice, and in the hush Collins' words sounded loud and aggressive:

"I'll bet I can name three men of his own weight right here in New York who can put him out in four rounds. I'll put up five hundred on it right now."

Not more than three men saw the quick negative jerk of Murphy's head and the

downward quirk of his lips, for Wheeler took the center of the stage.

"I am not looking for car-fare, Collins. And why go outside?" he asked easily. "How much will you put up—what odds will you give—that you can put me out in four?"

The big fellow flushed with genuine surprise. He had not hoped for such luck as this. A tense, listening hush around the table and a quick look from Murphy showed how daring was the challenge. Collins bit his lip to conceal his eagerness and confidence. Then the steady glitter of Wheeler's strange green eyes seemed to rouse him to anger.

"You want to face me—Queensbury rules! Is this a joke?" he growled harshly. "I'm calling your bluff. I'll try not to make it a joke."

Wheeler never batted an eyelid.

"But talk cash! Real money!"

"I will—you'll wish I hadn't!"

Steve showed his fighting face, and it was not pleasant.

"I'll give any odds—it's finding money. Three to one that you can't stand up four rounds! Put up a forfeit if you mean business."

"I will take a thousand of the small end and put it all up now."

Dan had his bill-book out.

"Redney will hold the stakes."

He passed a thin packet of bills to the man at the wheel, whose fringe of light-red hair fairly bristled with excitement. Dan added in a quietly comfortable tone—

"Why not pull it off right now?"

"Why rush this thing, gentlemen?"

It was the portly and suave proprietor who had come in unnoticed and now took a hand in the proceedings. He explained his interruption:

"I don't want to spoil good sport. I only suggest that this will be too good to miss, and there are several friends of ours who ought to have a chance to attend."

"—these friends of ours!" Collins exploded. "We are not making a show for them. Somebody might change his mind or get the police to interfere. Let's settle this thing, if Wheeler means what he says, before he changes his mind."

And his manner was lightly insolent. Wheeler made no direct reply in words, but the set lines of his face gave him a wicked look. He turned to Murphy.

"As a favor to me, Jack, will you take charge of arrangements and act as referee? Let's stop all this wind-blowing and get action!"

Collins agreed with as much cordiality as he could manage on short notice, and the Nonpareil gave counsel in his characteristic modest manner:

"Since the contest is to go to a knockout, it had better come off as soon and as quietly as possible, or the police may step in. I should advise going to the nearest place that is fit for a bout, and getting at it at once. Where is the nearest room that will do?"

"There is Carlson's Sanitarium," suggested Hawley himself. "He has a roped ring all ready on the top floor in his gym, and at this hour it will be empty. We won't attract so much attention on the way if we scatter when we adjourn and go down-town by different streets. Moreover, Carlson can be handled—I'll answer for that. He will do anything his friend Israfil suggests."

"Where is Israfil, by the way? He was here just a few minutes ago."

The crowd was already in the bustle and hurry of migration, hunting hats and coats, many of them hoping to find and fetch along some friend to see the fight. In this general excitement Wheeler pulled aside Mac and his two friends to tell them:

"I want Israfil and Reggie, here, to act as my seconds. Hunt him up and tell him, for me, that I want him in my corner because he knows more about certain massage-stunts to bring a man around when he's knocked out than any man in the city. Tell him anything—but get him! Understand?"

"Yes, I guess so," McLeod stammered. "B-B-But d-d-do you know where I—where we will find him?"

"Follow Hawley—go to Israfil's house—find him!" Wheeler snapped sharply. "And tell him to bring trunks and things I shall need. I rely on you to succeed."

"S-S-Suppose he won't come?"

Mac caught at Wheeler as he was about to turn away.

Dan seemed about to do something violent. Then he seized Mac's arm and drew him apart from all the rest.

"If nothing else will do it, get him alone—where nobody will hear, as we are now—and tell him 'No man can make him,' " he whispered in Mac's ear. "Better repeat that."

"N-N-Nobody can—"

"No man! You intellectual giant, no man!" Dan hissed venomously. "Get it straight and get a move on! No; I am not drunk or crazy, and it will do the business—get action!"

He emphasized it by almost nipping Mac's arm off above the elbow, and then started him going, adding menacingly—

"If you tell anybody or let anybody overhear, no man will see you alive after to-night."

As the three—McLeod, Reggie and Piet—clattered down the steps to the street in pursuit of Hawley, it was Piet who spoke for all three:

"A queer flop this! This Israfil now—where does he get his universal drag? Even my aunt falls for him."

Piet's aunt was the dowager empress of Manhattan, Mrs. Van Sandvoord, and what she said was quoted in print.

"I am scared, me!" announced Reggie, shivering, but with thoughts busy elsewhere. "I am betting on Wheeler because I like his game, but if Steve Collins lands just one of his haymakers—mamma! Mother! And the next day it snowed on the little grave where Johnny lay sleeping!"

"Steve would be worse than ever then!" assented Piet gloomily. "He will do it, too. Wheeler stands just no chance at all to keep out of his way four rounds, and his Jap tricks won't help him at all."

"There's Hawley getting into the only carriage in sight. Come on!"

Mac led them in a sprint after the gentleman gambler, for Hawley was one of the old school of sporting gentlemen—one of the last.

When he found out their errand he invited the trio to get in with him, and they talked on their way down-town.

"I am confident M. Israfil will not hesitate to use his influence to persuade Carlson," Hawley told them, "but I am not so sure that he will act as second. He is very jealous of his reputation for dignity and mysterious seclusion, although he comes to my rooms regularly. Did you know that he is possessed of marvelous physical strength and dexterity? I just discovered that he, as well as your friend Wheeler, is a ju-jutsu expert, but he declined to give an exhibition. He said it would lessen his 'psychic dominance,' whatever that may mean."

"Means bunk—hokum—slush!" said Reggie. "If this green-eyed Wheeler person

wants him for second, he's going to have him if I live! Queer how that boy has got to me—and I have only met him twice! I hate to see him smeared all over the ring. I am very unhappy—I want a drink, right now!"

"Were my waiters negligent?" Hawley asked anxiously. "I am very sorry——"

"No—not at all! I had only just come in at your place," Reggie protested. "Your staff is perfect—I never came out sober in my life."

"That is very gratifying."

Hawley was gravely sincere.

"I should be pained to think any guest of mine was not properly entertained," he added. "But regarding this contest: I regret that I shall be unable to see it, for I dare not leave my apartments between midnight and morning since these Spark Gang robberies have been so frequent, and my *croupier* must attend as stake-holder. I don't dare trust even plain-clothes men or private detectives. Here we are—I think we shall find M. Israfil has just come in."

Israfil received them in his small library on the first floor, and at first there was a frown of suspicion on his face as he greeted them.

"Well?" he said sharply, looking narrowly at Hawley.

That gentleman refused to take offense.

"Our errand is unusual, but purely friendly and disinterested, M. Israfil," he said suavely. "We are delegates sent to ask your aid and countenance."

And he proceeded to state their request in the most delicate terms. Israfil showed his surprise plainly.

"Pardon my *gaucherie* on your arrival. I feared you came because you were in trouble, coming so soon and in such number."

He showed his slight accent:

"I assure you that Carlson will be delighted to offer the use of his ring; I can answer for that. But as to acting as second in the ring—I am afraid I must deny myself that pleasure, and I wish very much to see the contest. I am very much fatigued, and I was about to retire——"

"May I speak to you in private for one minute?" Mac asked.

With evident surprise Israfil assented, and they stepped into a small room at the rear. McLeod noticed that it contained only a table such as is used for massage,

but he went at once to the point—gave Wheeler's message—

"Dan said tell you if you didn't want to come, 'No man could make you.'"

Mac had expected surprise, perhaps a sneer of ridicule, but he was startled at the effect of his message on the dignified poise of the charlatan. Israfil seemed stunned for an instant. Then he darted to a sort of cupboard at the back side of the little room. He snatched open the door with fumbling haste, took a look within and slammed the door shut with a quick jerk of his head over his shoulder, as if he feared to let Mac see what was inside it. Wiping his forehead with a hand that shook, he regained his manner with an effort and turned to McLeod.

"You will par-don me," he said stiffly. "I have forget something. Tell M'sieu' Wheeler I shall be with him in five minutes. You will do me a favor, yes! Make, then, my excuses to your friends outside. I thank you."

He bowed Mac out and closed the door after him quickly.

"What luck?" Piet whispered, watching the door as Mac made his appearance.

"He will come, and he asked me to beg you to excuse him. We may as well go on to Carlson's—he said it would be all right about using the ring and so on, and he said he would be there in five minutes himself."

"I wanted a word with him. Please knock on the door," Hawley said hurriedly, "before he gets out of the room."

McLeod still stood near the door of the small rear room. He turned, knocked and listened. He thought he heard a noise within, but no answer. He never knew how he came to do an unmannerly thing like his next movement, but without any further warning he reopened the door and entered, apologizing as he did so—

"I beg your pardon, but Mr. Hawley is——"

He stopped, stared and turned back to the other.

"He's gone—room's empty, and there's n-n-no other door!"

"What? No other door?"

It was Hawley who spoke, and his kindly face became of a sudden keen and hawk-like as he strode quickly through the door into the little bare room. With a practised eye he scanned floor, walls and ceiling.

He first stepped to the one window, high

and barred, which opened into a light-shaft. Then he opened the closet door; it was a shelved closet, without room on any shelf for a man to get in. Hawley left the door open and finished a swift examination of the walls.

"A very clever trick—the first I have ever seen him do," he said at length: "I thought he was above that sort of thing—had a better line of goods; but he did it well. What I can not understand is his motive—why he did it just *now*!"

The three younger men had looked on in astounded silence. Now Reggie spoke—

"How do you guess he worked it?"

"Very simply when you know how," said Hawley. "That cupboard was a sort of dumb-waiter—runs in a shaft; and the shelves fold up so a man can stand in it. There's no time to find out how it works, if you boys want to be in at the finish. I will drop you at Carlson's on my way home. I should advise you not to speak of this, since he evidently didn't intend us to discover it."

"But what *for*?" Reggie persisted as the older man hovered them out of the room and into the hall. "I don't see any sense——"

Here Hawley silenced him by a gesture and a look toward the boy, who was waiting to open the street door for them. When they were once more in the carriage he answered:

"Let me tell you again—I don't understand it at all, but I wouldn't talk of it. There are some curious things happening these days. Suppose we let it go at that for the present. Here is Carlson's. Good night!"

Apparently he had taken them into the carriage only to tell them that. For it was only a few doors up the street to where they got out, and he drove off at once without saying another word.

Standing on the sidewalk, the three looked at one another. Then Reggie said plaintively:

"I knew I ought to have a drink. Besides I don't believe it. He never went into that room at all; and there was no sense in getting into a cupboard anyway. He could have gone through the door just as well. We wouldn't bite him. And if he wanted to sneak off, why didn't he lock the door behind him? It was a fool trick—a kid trick—a— Say! Let's go back there and——"

"Wake up and turn over, Reggie!"

Piet took Reggie's arm and escorted him to the steps.

"Here's another bunch of the crowd coming. Probably most of 'em are up there already, including Israfil himself. He had time to beat us to it three times while we chewed the rag in his back room. That

was all; he wanted to get here first. Forget it—it's nothing to us anyway."

"And I'm to be Wheeler's other second. I almost forgot— Hurry up!"

Reggie came out of his trance and led the charge up the steps without another thought to Israfil's stage disappearance.

TO BE CONTINUED



Five Fathoms Down by Herman Petersen

IT WAS a mystery. Whence Sham had come no one knew. Not even old O Nuku who dwelt in the eery Place of Shadows.

Now that was unusual. O Nuku was old, very old. Seemingly for ages and ages—longer than any other living native could remember—he had lived in the tapu Place of Shadows, high, where the night winds were wont to moan and sigh, when the sun went down, and so speak of many things. Well O Nuku knew the manner of their speaking, knew the tongue of the talking winds; and ever he harkened to them, until he knew all the legends, all the folk-tales and all the sayings of the islands. Dark things he knew, too—things that were not even breathed in the faintest of whispers down in the villages. O Nuku was a *tahuna*, of a long line—he could recite the names of his ancestors, both men and women, through one hundred and forty-five generations, covering a period of more than thirty-six hundred years—and, therefore, he was very wise. Yet he knew naught of Sham.

It was strange. O Nuku knew of ancestors other than his own. But of Sham's forebears he disclaimed all knowledge. "Sled" Wildman, who was partner for the season with Sham in diving for pearl and shell, somehow got the idea that the old *tahuna* veiled some knowledge behind a purpose. So it was that one day Wildman laughingly suggested that O Nuku name just one of Sham's ancestors. To his great surprise O Nuku did so—readily.

"Po!" he croaked; and then he would say no more.

Now in the Marquesan tongue, which O Nuku spoke, Po is the name of the Prince of Darkness, the Lord of the Nether World; and Wildman grinned as he ambled down to the beach with his arms full of supplies—he had met up with O Nuku in Harscher's store where the *tahuna* had come for tobacco—and he thought that the venerable old owl from the Place of Shadows was not so very far from the wrong at that.

If Po was unguessable, so was Sham. Certainly he was not a Marquesan. Wildman was positive of that. To be sure Sham's

skin was tawny, and his hair was red-gold, always flaming in the sun; but he was sleek and slender, not a bit statuesque—even the Marquesan women are statuesque—and his eyes were strange. There was a hint of the Orient in them—the slant, perhaps; but, too, they were a deep sea-blue; and they never smiled, *never*, no matter how much smiled his lips. And Sham's lips smiled a great deal, as if to disclose his perfect teeth; but he never laughed. Had he been Marquesan he would have loved laughter; and he never did more than smile, flashingly, and with his lips alone. Then, there was nothing of the savage in Sham's appearance, in cut or cast, and that is apparent in even the most civilized of the islanders.

"Maybe it's there—inside—the savage part," Wildman laughed as he dumped his armful of supplies into the outrigger canoe drawn up on the beach. "Rub his fur the wrong way and I'll bet it'll show. I'd like to try. And maybe that's what old O Nuku meant. Po, eh! H'm! Well, O Nuku ought to know. He ain't so far removed from Po himself."

He waited the surf and then launched the canoe.

"He's a mixed breed, he is," he said, his thoughts still with Sham. "There's chink in him, just as sure as the ——. That's in him too, I guess. And there's Marquesan and some white. He's docile enough when things run smooth, but I'll bet he can sure raise — once he gets started. He's a bad mixture—but I'd like to try him out."

When the boiling water heaved under him again he sprang into the outrigger, seized a paddle, hunched muscled shoulders and plied the blade vigorously. Well out beyond the last coral bar, he stepped a slender mast, shook a small sail to the wind, then headed south—due south.



MIDNIGHT.

The moon, late risen, silvered a long glade on the restless sea. It sparkled, a jinnee's undreamed hoard of gems piled high and tumbling out on the moaning bar; rode shoreward on the booming surf, spilled there on the coral and sped fleet across the short-grassed, palm-clustered lawn; washed into a low thatched hut and bathed a man.

Without a start, without a sleep-wrecked quiver in all his naked form, quietly as he

had slept—as quiet sleep all men whose mothers bear them close by waves, anguish soothed by ever sad, sweet murmurings of drowsing tropic seas—Sham awoke.

He just opened his eyes and sat up on his mats. The moon was full in the opened door of the low thatched hut; outside the world was light. But neither for the moon-drenched night nor the black shadows within the hut did Sham have eyes. They saw nothing, did those eyes, and, yet, they were wide open and awake. Sham, just then, was not concerned with sight—he was listening.

The night was sibilant, hushed yet abounded with sound. Within the hut in a hammock slung along the side opposite the mats of Sham, Sled Wildman snored. Without—the world of midnight sang the island song. The feathered fronds of palms rustled, dry, with the trade-wind's sigh; jungle voices called; insects, a myriad swarms, were a-hum; the sea beat with a rhythmic hiss and booming on the coral beach, and from beyond came the sobbing, low moaning of the reef.

There were these sounds. And, more, there were other sounds, sounds ineffable—as if the isle, all sea-girt, sable-wrapped by night, slumbered on, not mute, with its breath abate, its pulsing heart held tight against the coming of the dawn. These sounds—and Sham heard none of them. Another, a different one, had come to his ears, even as he slept—a still, small voice, calling faintly from afar. It had seemed to come down to him, from the north, trembling on the silvered moon-glade, from out a hidden place all shadowed black.

Sham got to his feet and walked softly to the door. He did not make a sound; yet so sensitive to even infinitesimal changes are men whose very lives are kept to them by the canniness of each sense, Sled Wildman woke the instant Sham's shadow fell upon him.

Wildman sat up in his hammock. He saw Sham standing, naked, in the door.

"What's the matter?" he growled, his throat still thick with sleep.

"A voice! I heard a voice calling," Sham answered.

Wildman listened. Voices he heard, plenty of them, island voices. But no voice that called, no human voice. His ears were not in tune.

"——!" he exclaimed disgustedly, lying

back in the hammock again. "You're dreaming! Go on back to sleep. There ain't nobody calling."

Sham turned his head slightly to one side. Wildman could see, in the moonlight, that Sham was intensely serious. His ears were alert to every sound.

"I heard a voice calling," he repeated with quiet insistence.

Wildman grunted disbelief and closed his eyes. Presently he again began to snore.

For minutes Sham stood motionless in the doorway. Then, suddenly, as if he heard it again, he moved. Decision had come. He stepped to his pile of mats, picked up his *pareu* and wrapped it about his middle, like a loin cloth, binding it with a quick and simple twist that was for its purpose better than any knot. Thus garbed, he walked again to the door and passed like a drifting shadow from the hut into the night.

A canoe paddle leaned against the shack. Sham took it and balanced it over a shoulder. Quickly he trotted to the beach. Two canoes, outriggers both, were drawn up beyond the reach of the flood of tide. One canoe Sham dragged to the water, dragged it in until it was afloat. Then, timing his movements against the rushing surf, he shoved out the craft, jumped in and dipped the paddle.

An hour later, wind in a rag of sail, the outrigger was a vague, dwindling dot on the moonglade, far in the north.

When Sled Wildman woke for the second time at dawn, he yawned prodigiously and rolled from his hammock. Sham's mats, he observed, were empty. But, then, that was nothing unusual. Sham was an early riser; his mats were always untenanted when Wildman broke from his sleep.

"Swimming, I suppose," Wildman yawned and stretched. "Down to the beach tumbling in the surf. Queer how the Kanakas like water."

Sleepily he stumbled from the hut and stood blinking in the blazing brightness of the new-born sun. High up in a leaning coco-palm a ripened nut broke loose and fell with a dull thud to the ground. The sound roused Wildman from his drowsy reverie. He shook himself and started for the beach.

He scanned the long, white line of curling surf. Sham was nowhere in sight. Then he missed one of the canoes. The furrowed

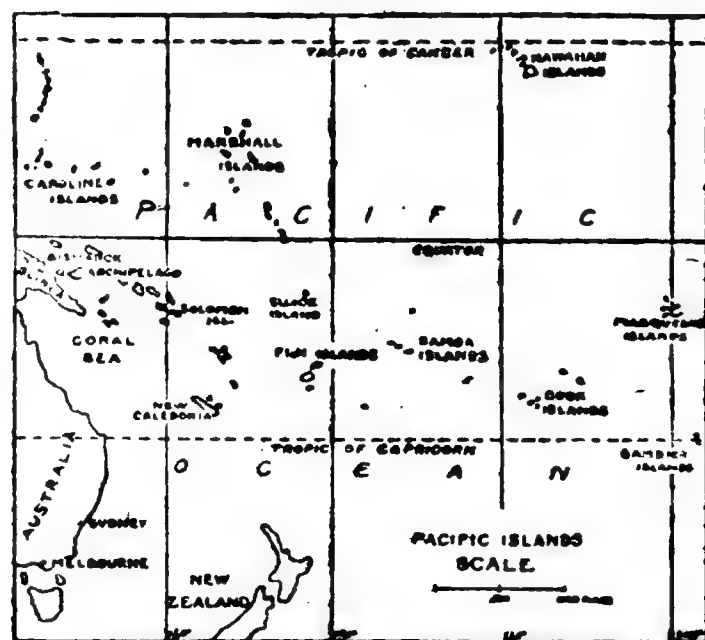
marks were yet deep in the sand, made when Sham dragged the outrigger to the water. Wildman scowled heavily when he saw the marks and read their all too plain message.

"Now where the — has that crazy fool gone?" he growled aloud. "Fishing? He ought to be back before this."

Muttering to himself, he followed the furrows to the water, in, then recklessly dived into the surf. For a time he sported in the hissing, boiling sea; but Wildman had the island-loosened white man's contempt for water—he could use it or leave it entirely alone. He made short shift of the morning bath and soon waded ashore.



It is trivial things that breed swift, red anger in the tropics. Wildman now succumbed to passion. In the days that Sham and he had been together, Sham had taken it always upon himself to supply their meals. It was all simple enough; the island supplied most of their wants. There were yams to be dug in the jungle, fruits of many kinds to pluck, small



birds and game to snare; there were fish for the taking in the sea. And the cooking was simple, done native fashion with a small roasting fire. A'ways Sham had tended to this duty. Now Sham was gone, without a word, off somewhere during the night. If he would eat before his partner returned, first he must forage in the bush, then curse as he built a fire. The thought was hot stones dropped in his blood. Sullenly he tramped across the beach.

And the anger grew. That is the way of tropic anger. By the time Wildman had

the fire bedding down to coals and yams and breadfruit on for roasting, a *kuku* plucked and ready for the spit, it was late mid-morning and he was in a murderous mood—a mood which Harscher, the trader, found, when he arrived, ripe and ready for his basket of a scheme.

Harscher was from Hiva-oa, from the Atuona side. He had come down in his launch, having started with the tide at dawn. He landed on the pearlers' beach unnoticed—Wildman, because of the smoke from the fire, had his back to the sea—and his quick eyes observed that Wildman was alone and hot with anger.

"*Kaoha!*" Harscher was careful to hail the pearler as he crossed the beach. "Alone? Where's Sham?"

"That yellow dog!"

Wildman ground his teeth viciously together and called down a blistering anathema on his absent partner's head.

"In a *mako's* belly for all I care! He went off during the night."

As he walked up to the fire, Harscher's puffy eyes narrowed a trifle. Here was luck! Wildman was boiling within him with his rage. Sham was gone. A battle? Had the partners fought? Had Sham bested Wildman?

Harscher shook his helmeted head slightly at each thought. One quick look at the white pearler as he squatted before the fire would have driven that notion from even a fool's head. Clad only in a stained pair of cotton pajama trousers, naked upward from the waist, Wildman was a sun-bronzed giant, muscled like a Thor. Compared with him Sham was but a slender boy. It was unthinkable that in any physical encounter between the two that Sham would come off the victor. Wildman could break the boy over a knee, easily, as he could break a bit of wood.

"No," thought Harscher, "the partners had not fought—not yet."

"Where did Sham go?" the trader asked.

Wildman raked a burned yam from the glowing coals and snarled at the question.

"He's gone! That's all I know!" he spat. "He woke me up last night. Said he heard voices calling. This morning he was gone."

"Voices, eh! And he's gone off hunting them!"

Harscher found a place beside the fire and sat down. He laughed, a gruff chuckle of a laugh.

"Then he's gone to Hiva-oa. I know that voice—Anitia's."

He produced a flask of American whisky from a pocket and drew the cork.

"Without a word he leaves you flat, eh! He breaks with his old partner to go gaze into a woman's eyes and talk of love."

There was an edge to Harscher's oily voice. He offered Wildman the whisky flask.

Wildman snatched the bottle. He tipped back his head of unkempt tangled blond and gulped down a good half-pint of the liquor. It stung his throat, made fire in his stomach which, though mid-morning, was empty of any food. He drew the back of a hand across his whiskered lips and spat.

"Break with me! I'll break his — head!" he growled. "I'll——"

Harscher took the flask, wiped the neck on a sleeve and took a sip of the whisky.

"Break his head and you'll be foul the law. The French'll get you. You know the rest—a cell on Ile Nou at Noumea and hard boards for a bed."

He held the bottle up, toward the sun, and squinted through it.

"But break his heart!" the trader exclaimed. "That is different, yet the same! It kills the spirit—and without spirit these natives die. True, it is not so quick—it is lingering—but lingering days are long days when there is suffering in the heart. It is for such sick ones that the death-fruit hangs purple on the eva-tree. Should Sham drink for solace of the eva's juice, what questions would the French have to ask?"

He handed the flask to Wildman again.

Cheap whisky it was, trade stuff—fiery poison to put in a stomach flat with a night of fasting. But Wildman emptied the bottle, flung it from him and glowered at it. His red anger grew with each swift passing second until mad passion was flaming in his eyes.

Harscher's puffy eyes saw and took on a gleam, a crafty gleam.

"But I came to talk about that black pearl, not about Sham," he said quietly.

Wildman grunted.

"To — with the black pearl! That'll keep! It's Sham—that yellow dog—I'm after! I'll pick him fruit from the eva-tree! What d'you mean—break his heart?"

Harscher removed his helmet and mopped his perspiring forehead. He shrugged his shoulders.

"Your Sham loves Anitia," he replied.

"Anitia? Who is she?"

"A maid of Hiva-oa. She lives alone with her mother across the island from Atuona. She is the daughter of a white sea-captain who was lost in the Low Archipelago. She is very beautiful."

He fumbled in a pocket for a leather fold from which he drew out a photograph. He held the picture before Wildman.

"See! She is very beautiful."

Wildman took the picture. The veins swelled on his temples. Harscher watched them beat with the drunken pearler's quickened heart pulse. Wildman's breath hissed between his teeth.

The picture as a picture was no more than a passing good one. To the girl Anitia it did poor justice. Wildman could see that Harscher had not overrated her charms when he called her beautiful. Beautiful she was, even for the islands where all women have a splendid, savage grace; stately, slim and proud of bearing, head held regally erect; dark-haired, soft-eyed, with a creamy skin made golden by the sun. Dressed in a figured *pareu* that fell from rounded breasts to an inch or so below her knees, she was formed like some nymph cast up by the sea.

Wildman licked dried lips and looked at Harscher. The trader knew lust when he saw it. He nodded, briefly.

"It can be arranged," he said, though Wildman had not spoken a word. "The mother eats opium. Her supply is gone. For a few tins—it can be arranged. But it is dangerous because of the law—expensive——"

Wildman cleared his throat with a bestial growl.

"Anitia! Sham's woman, eh!"

Then he laughed, lustfully, evilly. "Bring her here. Bring her here—and the black pearl is yours!"

Harscher got to his feet and lighted a rank cigar.

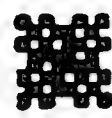
"In two days," he said.

He turned away from the fire and walked to the beach where the launch was waiting.

"That O Nuku is a ——," he muttered, puffing thoughtfully on the rank cigar. "He plays a game—two ends against the middle. I do not understand it. How does it finish?"

It was not until he was in his launch and chugging back on the way to Hiva-oa that he shrugged fat shoulders and grinned broadly.

"How finish? Eh! What matters that? Who can fathom a *tahuna*? They are priests of evil. And anyway, I get the black pearl which ever way it goes."

 HARSCHER had been right in guessing that Sham had gone to Hiva-oa, but wrong in thinking he visited Anitia. It was O Nuku, the *tahuna*, Sham sought.

It was full dawn when Sham reached the island. He beached the outrigger and at once took a dim trail leading through the flowered jungle that crept down to the sea. The path climbed steadily. In an hour the jungle fell behind and a grassed, treeless valley, walled at one end by piled up black, huge, frowning rocks crowned with purple clouds, bore the foot-road through its middle.

Sham did not pause until he had crossed the valley and stood at the base of the forbidding wall of rock. Here he did hesitate. Here the path mounted, up and up, until the end seemed lost high among the clouded peaks. And up there—the Place of Shadows, the place tapu, where dwelt old O Nuku.

Sham hesitated, but only for a moment. He gave his *pareu* a tightening twist and began to climb. At the third hour from the dawn he stood before the old *tahuna*.

"Kaoha, O Nuku! I have come. In the night I heard your call."

The old *tahuna* made a snorting noise through his nose.

"The young are full of dreams," he croaked. "You heard the singing of *komoko*, the nightingale. You heard it in your sleep."

"It was not the *komoko*, nor *kouku*, the owl," Sham said. "It was a voice. South it came, on the moon-path on the water, out of a place of black shadows. I followed it. It led me here—to the Place of Shadows."

O Nuku snorted again.

"Are you *tahuna* that you hear the Night Voice?" he jeered.

Sham made no answer. O Nuku sat quiet for a while. Then he rose, went into his hut and brought out a bowl of *popoi* and two coconuts. These he placed before Sham.

"Kai!" he croaked and sat down again.

Sham dipped his fingers into the *popoi* bowl and began to eat. O Nuku watched him narrowly.

"The voice you heard—" he began suddenly. "Perhaps the night wind cried my thoughts to you. I thought of you and Wildman."

"Wildman!" exclaimed Sham with surprise. "What of him?"

"Soon you go from his hut," O Nuku replied. "He takes an island maid to his mats."

Sham frowned.

"He has not spoken of that with me."

"The Night Voice told me," the *tahuna* croaked.

He fell into a sort of reverie and was silent until Sham had cleaned the *popoi* bowl.

"Wildman buys the maid," he croaked so abruptly that Sham was startled. "The price is one black pearl."

"But—" Sham began to protest.

"The Night Voice told me!" O Nuku declared solemnly.

That settled any possible argument, banished any shadow of a doubt. Sham was not sure just what the Night Voice was beyond the fact it was the thing which or the way by which was brought to the *tahuna* his uncanny knowledge concerning pretty much of everything going on in and about the islands. And why not? O Nuku was *tahuna*, priest of the darkness, dweller in the eerie Place of Shadows, communicant with the dread spirits of the dead. His dealings were with mystic things, frightening things, things tapu; his knowledge was of that which is beyond the ken of other men. It never occurred to Sham, or to any of the other islanders, that O Nuku might be simply and naturally observant and able to build his knowledge from mental notes.

And that was the whole explanation of most of O Nuku's canniness and uncanniness; he was observant and possessed of a good memory. That he knew of Wildman's possession of a black pearl and of Harscher's eagerness to take over that possession happened because he was in Harscher's store after tobacco the day Wildman had shown the trader the somber thing from the sea. He heard and saw Harscher try to buy it. Wildman demanded a thousand quid. He refused to deal with francs because of the day's uncertain rate of exchange. He wanted English money, and Harscher did not have a thousand pounds. So Wildman left the store with the black pearl in his belt.

Now O Nuku, unknown to any man other than himself, carried in his mind a burning memory of Sled Wildman.

A year before, Sled Wildman, then new to Hiva-oa, had wandered inland, exploring in the hidden valleys of the mountains. These are most all valleys of deserted *paepaes* nowadays, but near to sundown he came upon one valley where, nude and with wild abandonment, danced a score or more of natives drunk with *namu*, brandy from the coco-palm tree flower.

An orgy it was that the white man saw, an orgy that frightened him and warned him to flee the place. *Namu*, fermented, makes of the laughing, pleasure-loving islanders savages of almost incredible wickedness, bestial demons of men, and women too. Because of this the making of *namu*, which is very simple, is forbidden by law.

Safety was in flight; yet Wildman hesitated. Outside the ring of drink-maddened savages stood a young girl, alone. Like the others she was nude; unlike the others she was sober. Apparently she had not touched as yet the *namu* of which one drink makes drunk. She was standing, quietly, watching the others.

Wildman ignored the inner warning which urged him to flee. Another, a different prompting came. None of the natives had seen him. Keeping well within the leaping shadows cast by the dancing fire in the darkening valley, he made toward the girl. Cautiously he moved; when a creeper caught his foot and threw him with a sprawling crash. Aloud he cursed.

The startled girl whirled and saw him. On the instant she guessed his intention and screamed shrilly, adding a warning phrase in her native tongue. The drunken dancers paused their dance. Then with what seemed one wild yell, they charged at Wildman. And now indeed the white man fled.

Winged by fear, Wildman managed to escape the crazed savages. By dawn, and with the day's new light, fear went like fog before the sun. Came in its stead a rage at being thwarted in his plan. Wrathfully he hastened back to Atuona and reported what he had seen to the local *gendarme*. The *gendarme* promptly investigated. As a result O Nuku was arrested as the maker of the brandy, fined and imprisoned for some months.

Wildman had forgotten the incident. In fact, he had never known exactly what had

come of his report. He had left the island the next day. The old *tahuna*, however, had a stinging memory. He was pure Marquesan, and Marquesans are revengeful. He served his time in prison and waited patiently the day that he would hand back the blow.

That day had come.

As in his withered heart O Nuku knew himself, he, too, knew other men. To him the incident he witnessed in Harscher's store, the bargaining for the black pearl, was more than an offer and subsequent refusal. It was the bringing to the surface of the foremost characteristic of each of the two men. And of the two the old *tahuna* made a triad by adding his own racial prompting, the desire long nurtured, suppressed, but now pushing forward, budding schemes, all of the moment. His own ruling passion was revenge; Harscher's was greed; Wildman's was stubbornness, the determination to have things his own way. Too, O Nuku knew, he was lustful and jealous.

"The black pearl!" O Nuku croaked to Harscher when Wildman was gone. "You would have it?"

Harscher was leaning with his elbows on counter, a rank black trade cigar stuck at a rakish angle in one corner of his mouth. He squinted at the old *tahuna* through the sharp smoke curling about his puffy eyes. He emitted a deep grunt.

"Eh! Would I have it? Would you have a jug of rum?"

The *tahuna* grinned widely, showing teeth as white and even as any younger man.

"Rum he prenty good—warm belly," he said in his best English and nodded his head. "For juggen rum tell you how for catch black pearl prenty quick."

"Hmph! You tell—first. *First!* You *savvy?*"

Harscher puffed heavily at the cigar.

"Can do!" O Nuku came close to the counter. "You *savvy* a right Wildman got black heart for Sham he catchem too much pearl?"

Harscher took the cigar from his mouth. His puffy eyes narrowed.

"You mean Wildman's jealous because Sham fishes the most pearls?"

"Yes." O Nuku bobbed his head.

When he spoke again he dropped the weird, twisted English and used his own Marquesan instead.

"Sham finds many pearls—Wildman

few. The white man's heart is swelled with anger. It is like a hot coal laid near to powder."

"Meaning that one of these days he'll blow up, eh?"

Harscher jammed the cigar back into his mouth and began to chew the end.

O Nuku nodded again.

"Yes. And that day can be hastened."

Harscher smoked furiously for a few moments. Then he reached down behind the counter and lifted a full jug of rum to the top of the wooden slab.

"How?" he demanded.

O Nuku eyed the jug thirstily.

"You wait. I come back," he said. He left the store.

Within an hour he returned. From beneath his *pareu* he produced a photograph which he placed on the counter before Harscher.

"You *savvy* that *tiki?*" he asked.

The trader looked at the picture.

"Sure. That's Anita."

"Sham's woman," O Nuku said.

Harscher's eyes showed his surprise. "But Sham isn't married."

"One day prenty soon will be," the *tahuna* informed him.

Harscher laughed.

"So that's it, is it? But what's that got to do with Wildman and the black pearl?"

Then O Nuku laid bare his scheme. Wildman was jealous of Sham. Like a hungry fish he would snap at bait that would promise a way to injure Sham. And how better to work than through the girl, Sham's mate-to-be? Catch Wildman in the right mood, or make that mood with whisky, suggest his possession of the girl would be the deepest cut he could give to Sham; then name the price—the black pearl.

"What about the girl?" Harscher wanted to know. "What about Sham?"

"About the girl—it can be arranged," O Nuku said in Marquesan. "Her mother is an eater of opium. Two tins will buy the girl."

"But Sham?"

"Make never mind about Sham. I fix for him."

Harscher considered. A black pearl for one or two tins of opium, a jug of rum, a little risk and a few hours' time. It was worth trying.

He pushed the jug across the counter.

"Here, you old —!" he exclaimed.

"Take it! Keep as sober as possible and go fix for Sham."

O Nuku took the jug and concealed it beneath his *pareu*.

"You take *tiki* show Wildman tomorrow," he said as he left the store. "Sham he no be there. I fix."

And now O Nuku was "fixing it" with Sham.

"The Night Voice told me," he repeated solemnly to Sham. "Wildman takes a maid to his mats. Even now he has her *tiki*. He buys her with a black pearl."

Sham was silent.

"It is the white man's way," the old *takuna* went on, "that when a man takes a wife his friends make him gifts. I would follow the ways of the white man. I would make Wildman a gift."

He looked searchingly at Sham.

"You know the place of the Hungry Waters?" he asked unexpectedly.

Sham was making a cigaret, rolling trade-tobacco in a pandanus-leaf. He looked up sharply.

"Yes. I have dived there when the tide was full."

"You know, then, how lies the *Vehine*?" referring to a sunken ship on the submerged rocks near to the edge of the Hungry Waters.

"I have stood on her deck beneath the sea."

"Did you venture into her cabins?"

Sham shook his head.

"No. I was alone and feared for *feke*."

O Nuku snorted.

"There are no *feke* there," he said knowingly. "There is a chest of gold. It is my wish that you go to the Hungry Waters, dive down to the *Vehine* and swim into the forward cabin. From the chest of gold take six pieces. Give them to Wildman."

Sham tossed away his cigaret.

"Why should I do your wish?" he demanded of the *takuna*, wondering what thought was behind the idea of the strange gift.

O Nuku's eyes were beady. Their glance pierced Sham through.

"Because—" he answered very slowly.

"Because you are my son."

 THE next morning when Sled Wildman awoke the pungent smell of a driftwood fire was sharp in his nostrils. He rolled his hammock and went to

the door of the hut. Sham was back, bent over the fire, preparing breakfast.

"*Kaaha!*" Sham called out when he heard Wildman come from the shack.

Wildman answered with a growl.

"Where the — have you been?"

Sham waved a graceful hand toward the north.

"Hiva-oa. I went by night. By night I returned."

"Girl, eh?"

Sham smiled, with his lips.

"No," he answered. "Gold."

As he spoke, he reached a hand into the *pareu* twisted about his waist and fished out six clinking coins. One by one he tossed them to Wildman.

The astonished white man forgot anger as he weighed the gold in a hand.

"Sovereigns! English sovereigns!" he gasped, anger for the moment gone. "Where the — did you get them?"

"From a chest in a ship beneath the sea." Sham answered simply.

Instantly Wildman was all eager excitement.

"Where is it located? Can you find it again? Is there any more gold?"

"The chest is large and full," Sham told him. "The ship lies on a ledge near the Hungry Waters. I know it well."

"Then come on!" Wildman cried hoarsely, jingling the gold-pieces in his hands. "Let's get there! Let's fish up that chest!"

Sham's lips smiled.

"Go bathe!" he commanded quietly. "Then eat! It is far to the Hungry Waters."

Wildman refused to bathe. Even he would not wait until the morning meal was cooked. Breadfruit, yams and fish he snatched from the fire and wolfed his fill of the stuff half-raw. Sham, however, would not hurry. He waited until his share of food was done to his liking. Then he ate leisurely. Wildman paced the beach until he was finished.

Mid-morning they set out together, in the largest of the two outriggers. Through the scorching noonday they paddled north, helped but little by the ragged sail fluttering from the bamboo mast. It was near to three o'clock in the afternoon before Sham put down his paddle and took down the mast.

He pointed a finger at the sea.

"The Hungry Waters," he said.

Sled Wildman had never before heard of

the place. But it was well-known to the native divers, and they shunned it as a place tapu. A deep valley riven at some forgotten day in the ocean's floor, it had been fathomed. A ledge rose sheer from the murk of the bottomless depth to within five fathoms of the surface at flood tide. It was on this ledge, wedged in a crevice, that the bulk of the sunken schooner *Vehine* lay.

Five fathoms down! A golden treasure! Known to many men throughout the islands—yet Sham's was the first hand to take from it even one piece of the gold.

Five fathoms down. Just thirty feet. Not far at all for native divers who with the help of diving-stones fish shell from a hundred feet below the surface. Yet five fathoms down was a treasure untouched.

And the reason? The Hungry Waters. The place was well-named. The waters here *were* hungry. When the ebbing of the tide began, somehow and somewhere far down in the deep a mighty current was set up, a current that sucked the waters clean of every loosened thing. The submerged ledge mutely bore testimony to this greed: save for the *Vehine's* lodge hulk it was barren, swept, without shell, or weed, or stone—nude, black, raw rock. Hungry Waters! Only at full flood of tide did a man dare dive. Then the current was still.

Sham knew all of this and so had timed their coming. The tide was high, in flood, when they arrived. He bent over the gunwale of the drifting canoe, until he saw five fathoms down the shadowy form of the wrecked *Vehine*. Then he stood up, threw off his *pareu*, and, taking a diving-stone bound with a light cord fastened to the canoe, he stepped overboard and disappeared beneath the sea.

Wildman leaned over and watched his partner. Sham sank straight down and came to rest on the *Vehine's* slanted deck. Near to where he landed was the opened hatchway of the forward cabins. Sham vanished into the opening. In a minute he swam out again, mounted upward with quick strokes and grasped the gunwale of the canoe. He climbed in to regain his breath. In a hand he had four gold pieces. These he tossed to Wildman.

"The chest is heavy," he told Wildman. "Can't move it. I'll go down again—fasten the diving-stone rope to one of the handles. There's one on each end of the

chest. Then I'll take down a second rope and tie it to the other handle."

"Why not do both at once?" Wildman wanted to know. He was impatient.

Sham's lips smiled.

"It's dark there—I can't see. Have to feel everything I do. That takes time. I can only make one knot at a time and I can't stay under longer than three minutes at a stretch."

He fell silent and began to breath deeply, pumping full his swelling lungs. When he stood up to dive again, he checked the stepping over abruptly.

"*Mako!*" he exclaimed and pointed over-side.

The black, triangular fin of a shark cleaved the water not four fathoms away.

Sham watched the shark as it began to circle the outrigger. It was a big one, eighteen or twenty feet long, gaunt, hungry-looking as sharks generally are. Twice the gray one swam around the boat.

Sham wore his long knife hung on a cord looped about his neck. He removed it now, shortened the cord and fastened it about his right wrist. Then, with another quick glance at the *mako*, he dived. The shark followed him down.

Sham made the opened hatchway in the *Vehine's* deck and swam through. The shark followed, nosed the opening, then sheered off and swam leisurely about the wreck. Up on the outrigger Wildman felt move the cord that trailed below. Sham was working with it, unfastening it from the diving-stone and knotting it to one handle on the treasure-chest.

Two minutes passed. Then Sham swam through the hatchway. Wildman leaned over the canoe gunwale and watched breathlessly. As Sham came from the darkened cabins he seemed to hover for a moment, turning his head from side to side. He carried his knife in his hand. Wildman knew that he was looking for the *mako*.

The shark saw Sham at about the same instant Sham saw the shark. Pushing with his feet against the *Vehine's* deck, Sham sprang for the surface. The shark rushed at him.

Wildman cried aloud, not with horror at the sight, not with any unthinking idea of warning the submerged man below him who could not hear. Avarice impelled the cry—that and hatred for his partner. The old fires of jealousy flamed anew, and to them

was added lust, desire to possess alone the coveted chest of gold. The island-checked thin veneer of questionable civilization was torn from the white man the moment the shark shot at Sham. Wildman's soul was naked to the sun—he cried on the shark.

Three fathoms up Sham mounted. Behind him the long gray form began the rolling over, the upward turning of the white belly necessary before the *mako* can seize its prey. Wildman sucked in a great gasp of breath and held it. Sham doubled in the water, turned quickly, and swam at the shark.

Just what followed then happened too furiously fast for Wildman to watch. The great shark made a lightning-like swirling in the water, and Sham swirled with him. Once it seemed that Sham had seized hold of one of the *mako's* fins; again that the shark held Sham in its mouth and that Sham was stabbing, stabbing with his knife. Though they were all of twelve feet below the top of the water, so great and furious was the thrashing of the battle that the sea surface heaved and boiled.

Then, suddenly, the shark bent into a great U and whipped out straight again. Sham was flung off, as if hurled from a catapult. He shot to the surface of the sea, broke through, dropped back and lay very still. He floated on his face.

The shark made no attempt to follow. It too lay still two fathoms down. Wildman saw that slowly, very slowly, it was rolling over again, turning up its belly. And from low behind the cruel-toothed mouth a dark streaming was pouring, staining the sea.

"Blood!" snarled Wildman. "—him! He stuck the *mako*!"

Then he looked at Sham floating on the sea. Plainly he could see a great torn wound, serrated, the teeth-marks of the shark.

At the sight of Sham's injury, Wildman shouted with unholy glee. The *mako* had bitten the yellow dog!

With another yell Wildman flung off his *parcu*, snatched up the second coil of rope from the canoe bottom and dived overboard. Straight down to the *Vehine's* deck he went, to the opened hatch, then through. He would attach the second line to the treasure chest himself.

As Wildman splashed beneath the sea, Sham came to feeble life. He rolled over and slowly swam toward the ocean. He

used but one arm, his right. His left was useless, the shoulder muscles torn and mangled by the *mako's* teeth.

He reached the outrigger. Laboriously he heaved himself in and collapsed on the bottom, panting and sobbing for breath. For a minute he lay. Then with an effort he raised himself on one arm. A thought had come to his mind: why had not Wildman, fresh with air, dived down to help him battle with the *mako*?

Dim of eyes Sham looked up. Save for himself the canoe was empty. Wildman had gone down. His *parcu* lay in the bottom.

It was the *parcu* that caught Sham's battle-dulled eyes. It lay in a heap, as Wildman had dropped it. Protruding from a fold was a paper, a picture. Sham's lips smiled. A *tiki*! Probably the one of which O Nuku had spoken—the *tiki* of the maid Wildman was to buy for his black pearl.

Painfully Sham stretched out a hand and drew the *tiki* from the *parcu*. He turned it over to look at it. The smile whipped from his lips. A *tiki* it was! And of a girl! And that girl? *Anitia*! Wildman would buy *Anitia* with his black pearl!

A tug came on the ropes that dropped from the outrigger five fathoms down to the *Vehine* below. Sham hung weakly over the side and looked down. Two ropes! Now Sham knew why Wildman had not dived to help him. The white man had waited to see what came of the *mako* battle. He had seen and thought it death. Then he had dived with the second rope to secure the golden treasure for himself.

As Sham gazed down through the five fathoms of sun-lit sea, he saw Sled Wildman swim slowly from the hatch of the *Vehine*. And he saw one other thing. The two slender ropes which had dipped down so straight below were beginning to curve, to bow, bending toward the west as if some invisible hand drew them. And the dead *mako* with its white belly turned toward the surface of the sea—it was not rising to the top as it should. It was sinking; and it was slowly drifting west.

Sham saw—and understood. For the space of a beat his heart stood still.

"The Hungry Waters—" he gasped, still weak with sea-worn lungs. "The current comes! The tide now ebbs!"

The dead *mako* moved more swiftly toward the west. Five fathoms down

Wildman was swimming madly, thrashing with arms and legs—and he was moving not at all. The current had caught him. It began to draw him back. Wildly he caught at a rope from the canoe. He tried to climb.

Sham watched him. Wounded as he was from the *mako's* teeth, he was powerless to help. He did reach out a hand toward the rope. The knife, still looped about his wrist, struck and jangled against the side of the canoe. Sham heard it, saw it, dully. The knife banged the side again. Then its point rested on the *tiki* of Anitia which Sham had dropped.

Anitia! For the price of one black pearl! And Wildman who would buy her? Five fathoms down—in the maw of Hungry Waters!

Through Sham's right arm surged a pulse of life. A bright knife flashed aloft. Down once it chopped. Twice. At each blow was cut one slender rope. Freed, the outrigger drifted with the ebbing tide.

Then Sham collapsed into a huddle in the bottom of the canoe.

It was another dawn when Harscher again crossed the pearlers' beach. By the

hand he led a sun-bronzed girl whose head was hung in shame. Before the thatched hut door the trader stopped.

"*Kaoha!*" he called. "I've brought Anitia——"

Then his jaw dropped; he gaped.

Sham, his left shoulder crudely bandaged with strips torn from his *pareu*, came through the door. In his right hand, extended, palm turned up, lay one black pearl.

"Your price," was all he said.

Harscher did not say anything. He just pushed forward the girl, on whose face had come a smile, and from Sham's hand he took the pearl.

He did not say a word—not until he was well on his way to Hiva-oa. Then he took the pearl from a pocket and turned it thoughtfully between his fingers.

"Makes me think of O Nuku," he muttered then. "He's a —— that *tahuna!*"

He balanced the black pearl on a thumb.

"And this thing! It's —— bad, black luck!"

He flipped it from him. It made a tiny splashing in the sea, then sank from sight. Slowly it settled, until it came to rest on the ocean's floor—five fathoms down.

WHY THE MINING LAWYERS THROVE

by John L. Considine

NEXT to those who draw the prizes in the shape of rich ground, none profit by the discovery of a big mining strike as do the lawyers. The mining laws of the United States were framed by lawyers, and, after more than fifty years of experience, clear understanding of just what they mean is so lacking that every new camp established means fat fees for the "furred lawcats," as Rabelais called them.

If this be the case now, what was it in the days when we had no mining laws?

The New York lawyers were graduates of great universities. The leader of the Nevada bar was William M. Stewart, who had arrived in California less than a dozen years before behind the ox-team he had driven across the plains. In the vernacular of the day, he was a bull-puncher.

He remained a bull-puncher after his arrival in California, or, rather, a mule-

puncher, for he drove freight-wagons in the neighborhood of Nevada City and Grass Valley while he studied law. His first case was in a small town in Nevada County, California. He afterwards related that the only law-book in the place belonged to the sheriff. Whenever, during the progress of the case, he wished to consult this work, he would get into a row with the attorney for the opposition and smite him on the jaw. The judge would fine him for contempt. Stewart would refuse to pay the fine. The judge would order him into the custody of the sheriff. This would give Stewart a chance to refresh his memory, after which he would apologize to the court, and resume trial of the case, which would then progress smoothly until Stewart had further need for a look into that book, when he would again commit assault and battery on the other lawyer.

One thing that conduced to fat pickings

for the lawyers of those early days in Nevada was the informality of the records.

The first great discovery of rich ore was made at Gold Hill. The Mining Recorder of that district was V. A. Houseworth, the "village blacksmith," and the book of records was kept at a saloon, where it lay on a shelf behind the bar.

Whenever the miners wished to consult it, they would take it from its informal repository, and, if recent developments made it profitable for them to alter the boundary lines, as laid down in their original filing, they would change them to suit the need of the times.

The book served other uses, not even quite so dignified. Whenever the bar-room loafers felt like indulging in a little horse-play out of the ordinary, they would grab the book and "bat" one another over the head with it.

Many of the notices were so vague and indefinite of wording and construction that it would have made no difference had they never been recorded. The first notice recorded was of the location of a spring. It was made by O'Riley and McLaughlin, the men who a few months later discovered the great Comstock lode, and read—

We the undersigned claim this spring and stream for mining purposes.

That was all there was to it. The spring might have been in Idaho or Arizona, or in Ceylon or Madagascar, for that matter. No idea of its territorial location was given.

Many of the mining location notices were just as loosely drawn. Here is an average sample—

We the undersigned claim two thousand feet on this quartz lead, ledge, lode or vein, beginning at this stake and running north.

Not a word to indicate the whereabouts of the stake.

During the progress of one mining suit the lawyers quarreled for days about a certain stump from which one of the parties

to the suit desired to begin the measurement of their claim. They produced witnesses who swore they could identify the stump. Finally, as the simplest method of getting the evidence before the jury, the court adjourned, and judge, jury, contestants, lawyers and witnesses, all went out to take a look at the stump. But when they got there, no stump was to be seen. The other side had thoughtfully removed the stump a night or so before under cover of darkness. They had done their work most thoroughly. There wasn't even a reminder in the form of a hole where the stump had been, nor yet a depression in the ground of the slightest degree. The ground had been carefully leveled to leave no mark.

On such tactics oftentimes depended the disposition of millions of dollars' worth of property.

One of the famous properties, which yielded tens of millions of dollars in dividends, was the Yellow Jacket, so called because of the locators finding a nest of yellow jackets while prospecting for the vein. Here is the notice on which title to this ground originally rested:

NOTICE

That we the undersign claim Twelve hundred (1200) feet of this Quartz Vain including of its depths & Spurs commencing at Houseworth claim & running north including twenty-five feet of surface on each Side of the Vain. This Vain is known as the Yellow Jacket Vain. Taken up on May 1st, 1859—recorded June 27, '59.

H. B. CAMP
JOHN BISHOP
J. F. ROGERS

What the locators meant by "depths," in their notice, was dips—no matter in what direction the "vain" might dip, they desired to put on record their right to follow it.

Many notices read, "This vein with all of its dips, spurs, angles, variations and sinuosities." The words "variations" and "sinuosities," were presumed to capture everything in the vicinity.





Desert Fame

by Frank Robertson

Author of "The Long-Striker," "This Bandit Business is the Bunk," etc.

FOR nearly three months now Rampton had stared at the abstracted face of Jim Olney three times a day as they faced each other across the little swinging table in the sheep-camp. Nights he had lain side by side with the man in the bunk across the back of the wagon. Many, many times during those nights Rampton had raised himself on one elbow and glowered at the peacefully slumbering herder.

"Crazy all right," he would mutter angrily. "Crazy like a fox."

Seldom the men exchanged more than twenty words a day. In the morning when they were on the move Olney would tell Rampton briefly where to set the camp for noon, and at noon he would tell him where to set it at night. If they did not move at all no words were spoken.

Rampton well remembered the foggy day in late November when he had been kicked off a Western Pacific freight train on the Nevada Desert. It was only about five miles from a little desert town, but Rampton did not want to go to that town—nor any other town. Thoughts of a drugged and robbed sheep-herder and a pursuing sheriff were much too fresh in his memory. Had it not been for that confoundedly honest brakie he would have been well on his way to San Francisco and safety. But

—well, it was the town or starvation. He plodded on.

Two miles from the town Rampton had come upon a sheep-camp. Hailing it with relief, he had made himself at home until the herder arrived.

"Got lost and found your camp, so thought I'd stay here till you come and told me where I am," he explained volubly.

The herder stood with his foot on the wagon-tongue ruffling the neck of a huge dog. It was the dog rather than the man that gripped Rampton's attention. The dog was as black as coal from the tip of his tail to the points of his shoulders, yellow around the neck and ears, and his whole face was a splotch of pure white.

But it was the look of kindness and intelligence in his eyes which chiefly caught Rampton's attention. The dog had planted his forefeet on the wagon tongue and was surveying the visitor with a look of droll inquiry. Occasionally he would lick the herder's hand affectionately, and a look of adoration filmed his soft, brown eyes.

"Yuh lookin' for a job?" the herder asked.

"You bet I am," Rampton said eagerly.

"My camp-mover got drunk an' quit me," the herder said slowly. "You can have the job if you want it."

"I'll take it," Rampton accepted on the instant.

"Wait a minute," the herder said in his slow, soft voice. "We're goin' into the desert farther than any herd ever went before. I hate to be crowded by either men or sheep. I've sent supplies for the Winter as far as Dolly Varden Butte so you can't expect to see a town till next March."

"Suits me," Rampton said earnestly.

The herder could not know just how well it suited him.

"There's something else," the herder went on. "People sometimes call me 'Crazy Jim' Olney. It's because I hate talk. I do know sheep from A to Azzer, an' that's why my boss lets me go where I please. If yuh go with me yuh can expect t' amuse yourself, for I'll never talk this much to yuh again."

"I reckon I can manage," Rampton said drily.

"Had any experience?" Olney asked.

"Some," Rampton replied laconically. "Been hangin' around sheep-outfits for ten years."

It was true. Rampton had been hanging around the sheep country exactly as a buzzard hangs around a carcass. When he had not been able to fleece the "sheps" with the cards or drugged drinks he had sometimes resorted to harsher methods. But he had picked up some of the details of the work, and knew the life in general.

In the morning they started into the desert. Rampton found himself supplied with a good team of horses and a saddle-horse. Besides the camp there was a light commissary wagon to trail which was loaded with salt for the sheep and oats for the horses. Olney had not even asked for his camp-mover's name, and Rampton smiled contentedly.

At first the work was not hard. Olney did most of the cooking, and the problem of fuel and water was not difficult. There were plenty of dry cedars, and springs close enough together that the four ten-gallon kegs easily held enough water to last from one spring to the next.

Later on, however, the problem became more pressing. Wood had to be dragged for miles with the saddle-horse, chopped into six-foot lengths and carried on the boot behind the camp. The water problem was worse. As they got farther into the desert they had to depend upon the snowfall altogether. At times Rampton had to journey

from ten to twenty miles to the tops of the buttes where there was a light skift of snow. There he would build a fire and sweep the snow up with a broom until he had enough to fill his tubs. He would melt this and repeat the operation until he had watered his three horses and filled the four kegs.

Still they bore ever southward until they had left the most daring sheep-men behind. The browse for the sheep was wonderfully good, but Rampton had to pilot his wagon where wagon had never gone before. At Dolly Varden Butte they replenished their supplies, and kept steadily onward.



IT WAS only natural that such a radical change in his manner of existence should prove exceedingly irksome to Rampton. He had quite early conceived the notion that Olney had considerable money about his person, and money in another man's pocket was the one thing Rampton could not stand. One evening he casually produced a deck of cards and suggested a quiet little game of draw poker to pass the time away. He met only a curt refusal.

The lonesomeness began to get on his nerves, and it was only natural that he should turn to the dog, Baldy, for companionship; but here he was equally unsuccessful. The dog would have none of him. Rampton's every effort to curry favor with the dog was ignored by Baldy with a contempt that was sublime.

One night while the dog was eating supper by the wagon tongue Rampton slipped furtively outside and spoke coaxingly to the dog. Baldy lifted his head inquiringly, without so much as a friendly wag of the tail, then dignifiedly returned to his supper. Suddenly enraged the man kicked the dog viciously in the ribs. Baldy emitted a sharp, surprised yelp that brought Olney instantly to the door.

"Did you kick that dog?" Olney demanded grimly.

Rampton forced a laugh.

"Of course not. I reckon I must have accidentally stepped on his tail."

"Then after this be careful where you step," Olney said.

Rampton decided not to show offense.

"Sure. I wouldn't hurt him. Like to be friends with him, in fact. Best sheep-dog I ever saw. Funny, too. He seems to have

about all the breeds in the world in his make-up. Train him yourself?"

"He picked it up himself, I guess—like he does his friends," Olney retorted coldly.

From then on Rampton hated both man and dog, but he concealed it admirably, and their attitude toward him did not change. He would watch them together for hours. He noted that Olney talked to the dog for hours at a time, and Baldy made a pretense of understanding. In fact the dog did understand much. He took his orders from Olney's mouth instead of by gesture as most sheep-dogs do. Olney would leave him alone with the herd for hours, or he could order the dog to take the herd to camp and he would do it. Baldy seemed to know instinctively what to do. But if he did fail to understand his master's orders he became frantic.

But Rampton did not understand. A dog was a dog to him, and he had no doubt that the dog's allegiance would be quickly transferred to himself if Olney should disappear. It might be a few days, he thought, before Baldy would work his best, but he would soon come around—and then he meant to make the dog pay for some of those snubs.

And he had fully decided to make Jim Olney disappear.

Rampton had thought the matter over carefully. With Olney out of the way there was no reason why he could not take the herd back to the railroad, pass himself off as the owner and sell it at a good figure. Heavy with lamb as they were, the twenty-five hundred ewes should easily bring at least fifteen thousand dollars. Besides which he felt sure that Olney had a few thousands in his clothes. Little by little he had ascertained Olney's plans with the herd. The herder intended to make a deep swing into the desert, sticking close as possible to a chain of buttes for a snow supply and gradually working back to Montello to ship to the lambing-ground in Idaho. Rampton's idea was to strike the railroad a good many miles west of Montello.

He knew it was going to be a hard job getting the herd back alone, but with Baldy's almost superhuman instinct to help him it could be accomplished. The rest would be easy. It was not likely that the taciturn herder had ever made many acquaintances along the range. The owners would be expecting the herd at Montello.

No one was at all likely to question his ownership.

The ewes were a very ordinary looking band of tight-wools; exactly like thousands of other sheep on the desert. The Spring before, after shearing, they had been daubed with a huge W in black paint, but as the wool grew the paint had worn off and spread until the brand had lost all semblance to the letter it was supposed to represent. He could assert that it was an R or an M, and no one would question it. The ear-marks were different, but few sheepmen took the trouble to have an ear-mark of original design.

All in all, it would be dead safe if only Jim Olney was eliminated. That, Rampton brought about with surprising simplicity and ease.



OLNEY had left Baldy with the herd while he came in to dinner. When the herder was within fifty feet of camp Rampton stepped out with the camp rifle.

"See that — coyote over on the ridge?" he asked.

Olney turned to look, and Rampton threw the rifle to his shoulder and fired. The herder fell without a sound.

Rampton lifted the body of the herder, bore it some three hundred yards to a narrow gully and dumped it in. He spread a frayed, canvas tarp over the body; then managed to loosen enough frozen dirt from the edge of the gully to cover the dead man to a depth of three feet. Then he toiled half an hour or more carrying rocks to protect the rude grave from coyotes.

"Good enough burial for any man," he murmured. "And the beauty of it is the dog'll never know what become of him."

In that Rampton was mistaken. The moment Rampton reached the herd the dog hurried to camp. When Rampton brought the band in late that evening he found the dog digging frantically at the grave, but making no progress because of the heavy rocks.

"Got to get away from here right away," the camp-mover decided.

In the morning the sheep left the bed-ground at daybreak. Rampton followed close behind, whistling cheerily at the dog. Baldy came as far as the camp, but returned at once to the grave. He ignored utterly the food Rampton had placed for

him. Rampton had hoped to get the dog to stay with the herd while he moved the camp, then he would order the dog to take the herd to camp and by keeping him hard at work figured to make him quickly forget his dead master. Baldy's refusal to leave the grave gave him his first hint that things might not work out according to schedule.

"I'll be in a — of a fix if that — dog won't work for me," he cursed.

He left the herd and returned to camp with the horses. He coaxed, cajoled and threatened, but the dog remained on the bank of the gully above the grave, regarding him with smoldering, somber eyes. Something about the accusatory gaze of the dog made Rampton lose his head. In a rage he rushed the dog, brandishing a huge stick.

Instead of running, the dog gathered himself together, muscles bunched and ready, lips curled back menacingly. A dark suspicion in his mind had suddenly become confirmed. This man, he now knew, was responsible for the disappearance of the beloved master.

Rampton struck. But before his club was half-way down he lay flat on his back with seventy-five pounds of canine fury on top of him. Desperately he shielded his throat and, finally getting the dog by the scruff of the neck, threw him off. He got to his knees just in time to ward off another assault. The dog did not growl, and the grim purposefulness of his silent attack chilled the murderer. Once more he managed to throw the dog off and get to his feet with his club. Ten feet away Baldy crouched, growling threateningly. Seemingly he recognized that he was for the time overpowered, but he was threatening future vengeance.

Still wildly furious, Rampton raced to the camp.

"— the dog," he snarled, nursing his lacerated hands and arms. "I'll fix him for this."

He meant to most assuredly. He took down the rifle from the hooks and stepped out, throwing it to his shoulder. Baldy still lay above the grave, but he was too experienced with guns not to know what was intended. Too many times had he seen coyotes bite the dust when Jim Olney threw the rifle to his shoulder. It seemed to Rampton that he could not miss, but just as he pulled trigger the dog sprang into the gully like a released steel spring. Rampton

raced over to the gully, throwing in another cartridge as he ran, but Baldy had fled up the twisted course of the gully.

For a moment Rampton hesitated, but the keen edge of his anger had worn off. Then he prepared to take the course he had intended before he lost his temper. He packed the camp, hitched up the horses and gathered up every scrap of food on the ground.

"I've heard of fool dogs staying by the graves of their dead masters till they starved to death, but I never did believe it," he said. "When Baldy gets good and hungry he'll track the herd, and when I fill his guts with mutton chops and gravy he'll be ready to go to work."

By leaving the team standing he could get on his saddle-horse and give the herd a big start in the way he wanted it to go; then come back and take the wagon ahead again, and so make some progress. By night he was five miles from where he had killed Olney. He had decided to start at once for the railroad.

There had been a light snowfall several days before, and an unusually cold spell had kept it from melting. Rampton swept it up and kept his kegs full of water. To his right stretched a string of high buttes in a northeasterly direction; none of them directly connected, yet composing a sort of chain. The tops of them were usually covered by from two to six inches of snow.

It was along the foot of these buttes that Olney had intended to return to the railroad. The alternative route led due north, as far as Rampton could see over a high, cedar-clad plateau. It did not appear unduly rough, and he could see no good reason why he might not get to the railroad that way. The cedars lay under a thin blanket of snow, and doubtless there would be more storms, or at any rate some butte within reach.

But the next day it turned warm. By night he had reached the edge of the plateau, but the snow was gone. However, his kegs were all full. The sheep were accustomed to going without snow for three or four days at a stretch, but the horses needed two good drinks a day.

Snow-water is something of a thirst provoker, but Rampton cut the horses down to an allowance of three gallons each per day—the saddle-horse even less than that—and hobbled them cruelly at night so they could not wander away seeking water. That

way he managed to make one ten-gallon keg last all day. His knowledge of the range was superficial, or he would have known he was laying up trouble for himself.

By afternoon of the next day Rampton found himself in a place where he wished that he was not. The plateau was growing rougher and rougher; a labyrinth of small cliffs and coulées kept him guessing for a way to get his wagon through. He had long since abandoned the trail-wagon. Each detour he was forced to make with the camp meant extra hard work with the herd.

Sheep are dull, slow-witted creatures, but when once their foolish minds become impregnated with an idea it is there to stay with the pertinacity of grim death. Gradually it was dawning upon their brutish minds that they could have things pretty much their own way, and progress halted abruptly; the moment Rampton left them they scattered in all directions. For after all it is the dog and not the herder that sheep fear.

The man cursed Baldy with a bitterness that came from the depths of his heart. Long before this he had expected to see the dog come sneaking in. One good warming up by the dog would have completely cowed the recalcitrant band, and it seemed to Rampton that every biddy in the herd eyed him with malicious humor as they passed disdainfully around him like water pouring over a dam.

His temper could not stand the strain. Incensed by the herd's obstinacy, he grabbed a particularly incorrigible ewe, tramped her till he was exhausted and then threw her over a cliff to a jumble of rocks a hundred feet below.



BUT the next day he blundered on. The nearest butte was now nearly forty miles behind him, and he reasoned that it could not be much farther than that to snow straight ahead. Then, the afternoon of that day, real disaster came upon him. He was driving around a dangerous sidehill, above a deep wash, in something of a hurry to get the camp-wagon to the top of a cedar knoll. He noticed the leaders of the herd turn back, and for one moment he neglected his driving to lean out and yell at them.

That moment the front wheel of the wagon on the high side struck a flat rock not more than four inches high. It was

sufficient to tip the wagon over, and over and over it rolled to the bottom of the wash. The horses were jerked from their feet, but scrambling like cats, they broke their harness and got free. In a panic they stampeded wildly through the cedars, and the clutching limbs of trees quickly tore off much of the remainder of the harness.

The saddle-horse following behind had joined them, and they were far into the desert before they checked their mad flight.

Rampton had been jerked back into the wagon, and he was caught in a welter of broken bows, canvas, dishes, bedding, sirup and sour-dough. By a miracle no bones were broken, but the man was badly shaken up. In almost a daze he fought his way out of the ruin and crawled over to a boulder. Seating himself he gazed ruefully at the wreck. The camp was smashed beyond repair, but he comforted himself with the thought that the pack-saddles and *alforjas* were still left to him. He could salvage enough supplies to make a pack outfit and go on. One horse could carry the food; the other, the water.

Suddenly he bethought himself of the water-kegs and leaped up. The two full ones had been in boxes on the high side of the camp for balance. The empties on the lower side. He found every one of them demolished; not a drop of water left. Dazedly he staggered back to the boulder and sat down with his head in his hands. His situation had suddenly become desperate.

The sky was as hard as brass; no prospect whatever for snow. The plateau had deceived him, and he dared not trust it farther. It was over forty miles back to the nearest butte, but he must take that route. As yet he had not missed the horses, and he had no fear that his life was in danger. He could easily get along for a while, and there were sure to be sheep-camps around some of those buttes. The thing that hurt was the knowledge that he must abandon the herd. He hated to give it up, that fifteen thousand dollars for which he had committed murder and risked his life.

He had already suffered one bitter disappointment when he had found that Jim Olney carried no wealth other than a check-book. But a miserable death awaited him if he tried to go on with the herd without water, and before he could return to it, if he went on for water, the sheep would be hopelessly scattered. Then he missed the horses.

He started to get up, but dropped back suddenly as he heard a low, menacing growl. Crouched directly above him on the lip of the wash was Baldy. The dog's once kindly face was now distorted with deadly, implacable hatred.

The next moment the dog sprang.



FROM a safe distance Baldy had watched the murderer of his master drive away with the sheep-camp. The hair on his shaggy neck stood on end; a growl rumbled deep in his throat. He hated this man with an intensity greater, almost, than a human could understand, because every function of his brain was concentrated upon that single purpose. With a sure instinct he had distrusted Rampton from the first. Now, though he had not actually seen the man kill Olney his instinct told him unerringly that it was Rampton who had encompassed the destruction of the beloved master.

Baldy knew that his hour had not come for dealing with the murderer. While Rampton had the rifle or was in the camp where it was, his power was too great. All the dog could do was watch and hate.

He watched with some concern while Rampton drove the herd away. It was all right to take the wagon—that was Rampton's business—but the herd was a different matter. That was altogether wrong from Baldy's point of view and hard to ignore. Olney's life had been in some strange way bound up in the herd as his life had been bound up in Olney's. He knew that Olney always directed the movements of the herd; there was never a time when it was not under his control. It was all wrong that this other man should be usurping the master's job. But Baldy recognized that there was nothing he could do about it.

As soon as Rampton had disappeared Baldy returned to his solitary vigil above the crude grave. For a while his sole thought was of the calamity that had befallen the master. Then, gradually, there was less of mourning and more of brooding. Somewhere within him there may have been a hope that Olney would return—would come out from under the rocks where the dog knew he was—but as the days passed this hope was dispelled. Hunger and thirst claimed him.

Once in the night he loped away to the nearest butte and lapped up snow until he

was satisfied, and morning found him above the grave. Occasionally he would make short sorties to old bed-grounds and grind a few old mutton bones to powder between his powerful jaws, but at best it was a tough living.

Gradually his thoughts were veering away from Jim Olney. Not that the master was being forgotten; not that his love was weakening, but a sense of duty was surely calling him. And from the days when he was a fat, rolipoly puppy, Olney had trained him in the ways of duty, and loyalty to the herd. He began to wonder if the master would want him to continue the lonely vigil, or would he want him to follow and care for the herd?

It had always been Olney's silent boast that Baldy was "level-headed." That level-headedness was guiding the dog now. Olney represented an epic in his life that was past, for Baldy recognized the irrevocability of death; but the herd represented a present duty. And always in his mind was a vision of Rampton, the usurper, that made the hair along his back bristle angrily.

As the third night began to merge mellowly into the coming day Baldy moved away from the grave with a determination not to come back. He walked slowly, looking back over his shoulder, and his tail dragged. It seemed that the heart of him was left behind. He stopped many times, gazing back wistfully. At last he reached the top of the last low ridge from which he could see the grave of the beloved master. He stopped, pointed his nose to the sky and voiced the wo that was in him in a long, melancholy chant that carried for miles over the empty distance.

Suddenly the dog shot to his feet, the hair along his back bristling. His farewell song had been interpreted by a wandering coyote, and the desert waif had vented a sneering, snappy, malignant bark of triumph—and it came from the direction of Olney's grave. In an instant Baldy was tearing back as fast as his legs would carry him.

Long before Baldy reached the grave the lurking coyote had caught sight of him and merged himself into the purple greasewoods. But Baldy was not to be imposed upon. The scent of the marauder was still fresh, and he took the trail unerringly. Perceiving that trouble was ahead the coyote led out in a long, steady lope. But Baldy

was cunning in the way of coyotes. A mile past the grave he paused, barked loudly, as a bluff, and loped slowly back.

As he knew would happen the coyote turned and followed him. Instantly he put on more speed as if in fear, and the coyote, at once convinced that his foe was afraid, was soon nipping at the dog's heels. It was the thing Baldy had planned to bring about. He stopped suddenly and reversed his course in a movement that was incredibly swift.

The unthinking coyote was taken completely by surprise and bunted head-long into the dog—but his fighting instinct told him what to do. He slashed down Baldy's shoulder with long, keen fangs that brought rivulets of blood, and bounded back like a rubber ball—only he did not bound far enough. His spring was too slow by the smallest part of a second. The dog had him by the throat.

The coyote had often fought sheep-dogs and always managed more than to hold his own. He anticipated no trouble now. True, he had never before permitted them to come to grips, but a few convulsive leaps and some twisting of his loose hide should break the dog's hold, and then he would administer proper chastisement.

Baldy rose to his hind feet, lifting his adversary by sheer strength and shaking him mightily. The steel muscles of the coyote contorted, recoiled and twisted, but break loose he could not. The coyote was no match for the dog in strength, and his greater activity and fighting cunning stood him to no advantage. He had a still greater handicap than he realized. Baldy was fighting to retain inviolate the body of his beloved master.

The dog meant death. With a herculean effort Baldy swung his foe clear and crashed him to the ground. In an instant, too swift for the coyote to take advantage, he had shifted his hold to a death-grip.

Ten minutes later he loosened his hold on the limp form, and after a desultory dab or two at his wounded shoulder with his tongue, stalked away without a backward glance.

For an hour Baldy again lay above the grave of his master, but it was mostly to rest. He had made up his mind to find the herd, and find it he would. He was thirsty, but he had always been able to get a drink at the camp, and he had no thought that this time would prove an exception. He

arose and trotted away with his nose to the tracks of the herd.

Once beyond sight of Olney's grave he made rapid progress. He was now all eagerness to find the herd, and frequently he broke into a tireless run that sent the miles reeling behind him. At sight of the herd he gave a little yelp of joy, but one glance told him they were not acting right. They had no business to be breaking away from the main band into little bunches, and they had no business to be headed in more than one direction.

What they needed, he decided, was a little discipline, and he proceeded to give it them. He started around them with a rush, and at mere sight of him all their old terror of him came back. Frantically they turned and bolted toward the center, their short little tails bobbing ludicrously.

His presence was telegraphed around the outer edge of the herd by fear. The first ewe to catch sight of him had given an alarmed *blat* as she turned to flee, and it was caught up and passed on instantly by the next in range, and in less than a minute the whole herd was headed inward. But Baldy knew they needed a lesson, and he circled them twice until the herd was a compact, heaving mass of solid white thrown together as if by centripetal force.

Satisfied that the herd was again under control, Baldy naturally found the wagon-tracks and followed them to the scene of disaster, and there he suddenly confronted the enemy. Until he had killed the coyote he had never killed anything larger than a gopher, and it had given him a strange exhilaration, this killing in mortal combat. It all came back with a rush now, intensified by the deepest hatred as his eyes rested upon Rampton.

He was not a reassuring sight. Thirst made him slaver at the mouth; his white face was streaked with dried blood from the battle with the coyote, and his once kindly eyes were now red and crackling with anger. It was small wonder that Rampton cowered with fear at sight of him.



EVEN as Baldy left the earth in his leap Rampton sensed his peril if the dog caught him sitting down. He started to arise, but was only unbalanced when seventy-five pounds of enraged dog struck his chest with the force of an avalanche. He went over backward across the

boulder with his legs higher than his head, and the dog on top of him striving fiercely for the throat.

He had instinctively thrown one mackinawed arm across his throat, and this the dog seized, his powerful fangs sinking through the heavy cloth into the flesh.

Rampton was a strong man. With a throw of his arm he lifted the dog bodily and hurled him aside, but before he could move Baldy was back with his powerful forelegs planted on the enemy's chest. This time his teeth sank into the man's shoulder.

In something approximating panic Rampton smothered the dog to him and rolled over. They fought silently, brutishly. The man by turn trying to choke the dog, or pounding him fiercely in the ribs with his naked fists; the dog biting, chewing, trying always to get at the tender flesh of the throat.

Finally Rampton managed to stand up, where he fought off the dog with his feet. But he was growing very tired. He had been badly shaken up to start with, and seemingly the dog was as tireless as he was relentless. He looked about desperately for a club, but there was nothing on which he could lay his hand. The one thing about the camp that might have served, the neck-yoke, had been dragged away by the horses.

He thought of the gun. It was tangled up somewhere in the bedding inside the wreck of the camp, but he knew that he must have it if he intended to live. In desperation he turned his back upon the dog and dived headlong into the small aperture which he had made when he escaped from the camp. Before he could get through the wreckage Baldy had grabbed him by the knee. The hurt brought a scream of pain from the man—the first sound from either since the fight began save their heavy breathing.

Rampton dragged the dog half-inside the camp with him, and then he gave a gurgle of joy as he saw the barrel of the rifle projecting out of the bed just within reach of his hand. Desperately, eagerly, he seized it and dragged it toward him, while a grin of triumph overspread his face. No dog could master him. He would endure the pain in his knee until he could work the rifle out to where he could place the muzzle against the dog's head. There would be no missing this time.

The gun caught on something in the bed and he jerked it viciously forward as a sud-

den twist of the dog's jaws brought a new twinge of agony. He had not noticed that the muzzle was now squarely against his own chest, and he never knew that it was the hammer that had caught momentarily in the fold of a blanket. There was a single loud report as the hammer came loose and fell, and Rampton collapsed like a punctured balloon.



BALDY was back at the top of the wash. His body ached from the terrific pummeling he had endured from Rampton, but in his heart was a great joy. He knew that the man just below him was dead, and that was enough. Being a dog, he had no qualms of conscience, nor did he trouble to inquire what had caused his foe to collapse so suddenly. The man had died under his attack, and that was enough.

The shot had sent Baldy to the top of the wash in two startled leaps, but as there was no pursuit he stopped, poised for instant action, and a little later his unfailing instinct told him the man was dead. Little wonder that he attributed the fallen foe's condition to the fight rather than the shot.

After a few minutes' rest he returned to the herd, and the ewes, still shaky from the fright he had given them, were still bunched. As they saw him lie down at a reasonable distance they loosened up slightly and began to bed down for the night. Thirst was beginning to torment them, and they stirred uneasily many times during the night, but each time a dark form with a blazing white face warned them to stay where they were.

With the approach of dawn the sheep shuffled uneasily forward and Baldy permitted them to pass. This time there was no straying, no wandering. Instinct was taking them back to the butte where they had last tasted snow, and fear of the dog trudging steadily behind them kept them from straying.

By this time Baldy was in an agony of thirst. The long time without water, his supreme exertions of the day before, and his sore, aching body made his condition really pitiable. But he was with the herd to stay. He felt it was the thing Jim Olney would require of him, and he would not betray the trust. From the tops of the higher ridges he could see the snow-capped tops of several buttes, and he knew that he could cover the distance to the

nearest of them in a few hours, while it would take the slow-moving herd two days at best to reach it; yet he denied himself grimly and trotted behind the herd, keeping it moving steadily, and fiercely disciplining any refractory biddy who showed a disposition to cause trouble.

At nightfall he crossed in front of the leaders, and by a few circles around the herd made it lie down. By this time his thirst was sheer torment. He looked longingly again and again in the direction where he knew was instant relief for his feverish, parched mouth and throat. He knew he could go to the butte and get back before morning. But, fighting against temptation was his training of loyalty to the herd. It was his heritage from Olney—he must not desert it.

He laid down a hundred yards from the herd and waited as patiently as he could for the approach of dawn. Once, shortly after midnight, he heard the half-challenging, half-inquiring yelp of a coyote. Rising, he hurled back a defiant answer, and the marauder was heard no more. Baldy was filled with a great pride that he had stuck to his post, for had he yielded and gone on to snow he would have found many mangled carcasses of his charges when he returned.

The next day was a repetition of the first, though the herd, now nearly frantic from thirst, made much better time. The ewes no longer stopped to browse, but marched straight on toward the butte, and as the smell of the snow assailed their nostrils they broke into a shambling trot.

Not until the herd was within easy distance of the snow where he could keep an eye on them at all times did Baldy go ahead, and then he circled widely to avoid turning the herd back. And even as he reveled in the relieving snow he kept one eye cocked on the herd's movements.

By the time the sheep reached the first patch of snow with pleased little *blats* of satisfaction Baldy had quenched his raging thirst. He lay watching them idly, but with a hint of trouble in his soft eyes. So far he felt that he had done right in every particular; in his battle with the coyote; in his struggle with Rampton; in trailing the sheep to snow. But the future was a question almost beyond his dog's brain to solve.

He could stay with the herd, would stay with it until the death, but he knew that more was needed—the guiding mind of

man. A hint of Spring was in the air. In just a few more weeks the desert would become intolerable. He knew that about this time of year Olney always trailed the herd northward to a place where the sheep were loaded into huge boxes where they peeked out ridiculously between narrow boards.

There was much excitement at this time, and then followed a long ride in another great box with Jim Olney and other men that lasted for many hours. Then when he would be let out of the caboose Baldy would find himself in a mysterious land where there was real water that flowed in creeks, and real grass instead of the sweet sage and shad-scale of the desert. All this he remembered—but how was he to act without Olney?

It was late when the sheep struck the snow, and that night they bedded on the butte. In the morning they were ready for the flats again, and Baldy let them go. They started to wander aimlessly, but the dog would have none of that. He put them on a straight course that led to the northeast, and he held them to it, though he permitted them ample time to graze. No one could have suspected the doubt and misery that was really in the dog's mind.

And then, shortly after noon, his acute ears caught a sound that thrilled him with joy. It was human voices. A few minutes later two horsemen rode into sight, and Baldy raced to meet them. The men reined up sharply.

"Hello there," one of the men exclaimed. "I know that dog. I never would forget that bald face. He belongs to a feller they call Crazy Jim Olney, who runs one o' Blanding's herds. I'll bet this is the outfit them horses we found belongs to. Hi, Baldy?"

Baldy wagged his tail in friendly fashion and laughed kindly. These men were not like Jim Olney, but neither were they like Rampton. He was ready to take their orders.

"Something ——— serious is wrong here," said the other man soberly. "That dog has gone through——"

The two men searched as long as they dared but they had their own herd to care for, and now this other one. In fact they would not have come at all had not three camp-horses come to their camp, two of them encumbered with fragments of harness, and they feared some one needed help badly. Finally they started the herd in

the direction of their camp. Baldy had had half of their lunch and, filled with a great joy at the reassuring presence of men, he drove the herd skilfully and eagerly.

"Some dog," remarked one man.

"That's just the trouble," remarked the older man. "Something mighty bad has happened to the herder and camp-mover of this outfit. They may have tipped their wagon over and got killed, or more likely fell out about something an' killed each other, or one of 'em may have gone crazy an'

done the other up, an' then wandered off in the desert. Whatever it was, we can tell by the looks of this dog that he's brought this herd so far alone that by the time we can send men back to look there ain't one chance in a hundred anything can be found."

The herder's words proved prophetic, but to Baldy there came undying range fame as the dog who by almost human intelligence and superhuman endurance had preserved a whole herd of sheep from destruction.



*A Complete
Novelette*

Jackaroo by J.D. Newsom

Author of "The Deserters," "Marty's Bones," etc.

CHAPTER I

THE LAND BEYOND THE RIDGE

THE scrub ends at the foot of the Cooloo Ridge. For a hundred miles or more the trail winds beneath an arch of rubbery mallee leaves so thick they shut out the sun, and there is not a blade of grass growing between the stiff, straight bolls. It's all sand and rock, and the air is quiet, heavy as that of a vault that has not been opened for years. And then—the sunlight and the barren ridge forming a yellow arc against the blue sky.

The ridge isn't high, the grade is easy, and it's good to escape from the stale twi-

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light of the scrub. From the crest where dry bushes rattle in the wind the ground falls away, fold upon fold, yellow sand and purple gully. The sky is empty, and so is the earth, barren, blazing-hot and still. Away, away, indistinct in the haze, almost on the edge of the dust-veiled horizon stand three giant beefwood-trees, three little dark blobs strung out in a line about a hand's breadth apart.

These vanish from sight as the traveler goes down among the boulders and fights his way across the face of the desert, which is furrowed by steep-banked ravines. If he misses those trees—and they are easily missed—if he swings to the right there is no hope, he is done for; if he goes to the left and can hold out for three days, maybe,

with luck, he will strike what was once Stafford, the mining-camp, where a few fossickers and Chinese linger on. But everything is against him—left or right of the trees and it's a thousand to one the desert will get him. So it is wise to keep close to the track, which is clearly marked with every kind of bone, horses and bullocks and mules and a camel or so and a man or so.

By the left-hand trees is a well, seventy-five feet down to water, and the shaft is crumbling, now that the heavy traffic has stopped and the man who dug the well has gone out of business. Fifty yards away are the remains of the hotel he built, mostly bottles and empty tin cans and a gate that leads nowhere and closes nothing. Just a gate between two uprights the black boys found too bulky to haul away and too hard to burn. But they stole everything else worth mentioning, corrugated iron off the roof and the weather-boarding walls and what furniture there was left when the owner—George Denton was his name—gave up the business. As a matter of fact, he's dead. He is buried on the south side of the pile of empties beneath a couple of feet of sand.

He called the place the "Sunrise Inn," and while the boom lasted over at Stafford his trade was more than good. The business alone wasn't enough for him, however, although it paid for itself hand over fist. He had the gold fever right enough, but he had no ambition to go on to the camp and stake out a claim for himself. He wasn't that kind. He was too crooked to do a real day's work with a pick and a shovel; he liked ease and comfort and money, but he didn't want to sweat for his money. He was a big fellow, thick-set, a bit too heavy about the shoulders and slow on his feet, but he could shift his bulk out of the way of trouble as quick as you please. Queer looking cove—a cross between a barkeep and a Methodist minister. Three chins and a thick blob of a red nose, a mouth as straight as a string, and gimlet black eyes beneath thick gray brows. His hair was plentiful; he kept it well-oiled and parted in the middle and smoothed down on his round skull, which earned him the name of "Straight and Narrow," but he didn't mind that.

He drifted up-country just about a week after the boom started and in no time he threw the Sunrise Inn together and was doing business. He'd roped in a few black

boys and their gins to look after the horses and attend to the place, while he sat in a creaking deck-chair by the door fanning himself and talking to the customers as they dropped in. He could laugh and crack jokes with anybody, and there was not a soul like him in the district for making men want to linger on at the bar. They lingered, drinking warm beer and shandygaff and plain raw whisky, and more often than not they left their pile in Denton's hands and went back to Stafford to get more.

But sometimes there came along a digger a little more canny than the rest, who knew just how much warm beer he could imbibe before going out into the sun again. That type had usually cleaned up pretty big and was headed hot-foot for Melbourne, probably hoping to get there in time for the Cup. And that's where "Long" Butler came in.

Long Butler was Denton's drover and handyman. While his boss sat in the doorway checking up the drinks Butler would trundle off to Horsham with a springless bullock cart to fetch in fresh supplies. He was here today and gone tomorrow, always on the move. Nothing very startling about him either—thin sandy hair and a sandy walrus mustache out of which stuck a short clay pipe. His face was thin and freckled except about the eyes where the skin was all wrinkled and tinged a darkish brown like old leather. When he was loafing at the Inn he used to sit on the paddock fence staring off toward the Cooloo Ridge, and he didn't like to talk. He was about as conspicuous as a star on a cloudy night. He wanted peace, and he got plenty of it, so that when he wasn't present he wasn't missed at all. That's why he was so useful.

Once in a while a digger came down from Stafford toting a fair-sized lump of dust or maybe nuggets, who would stay at the Sunrise just long enough to fill his water-bags, have a couple of drinks and trek on south toward the Ridge. By and by, toward nightfall, Butler would saddle his horse and pick up the trail without making any fuss. He carried a Ross rifle with a telescopic sight, and he knew how to use it. Also he knew the lay of the land blindfolded, as it were, for he'd swing out away from the track and go belting along from gully to gully following a zigzag course. At dawn he'd be squatting down behind the rocks somewhere near the foot of the Ridge.

He always got his man. First he plugged

the horse and then the rider. One-two! Never missed a shot. And the digger was usually dead before his mount rolled over. Clean work. Then he would drag the corpses clear of the trail, dump 'em down into the nearest hollow, obliterate all tracks and depart. He rarely tackled two men traveling together so that the system worked nicely and for quite a long time.

It worked until Stafford was all but played out, and then Larry Machin interfered and— But that comes later.

CHAPTER II

LARRY TAKES A CHANCE

TO BEGIN with, Larry didn't belong to the backblocks at all. He was a flat-chested, pigeon-toed little townie from Melbourne, or it may have been Sydney. Nor had he willingly left his slum. Far from it! In early youth he had acquired a set of habits, all of them vicious, some of them criminal. Not unlike Straight and Narrow Denton his pet hobby was cleaning out the pockets of cattlemen and prospectors, but his methods were much more crude.

Shifty-eyed, foul-mouthed, he used to hang about outside the shady saloons down by the Melbourne docks and wait for the lonely digger. It was nasty, dirty, mean work. He preyed upon the drunkard in the gutter and stole the leavings of more audacious crooks. More often than not he went hungry because the leavings that came his way were scant. At times, with other members of the Vine Street gang, he attempted armed hold-ups, which brought in more cash, but the work was too risky and he hated it.

Then one day he "took up" with a girl, a laughing-eyed creature with a small ivory-white face and a mop of coarse black hair. She was as bright as a sparrow and attractive, even though she did not know or care how she wore her shabby clothes, and her only hat was a man's cloth cap jammed down on her head. For a while she lived with Larry in a bare draughty room in a court off Vine Street where Italian immigrants fried garlic eternally.

Ida Goming—the girl—stayed with Larry long enough to find out just how useless and rotten he really was and then transferred her affections to the leader of a rival gang, who was burly and big and humorous according to Vine Street standards. At all

events he looked and acted like a man whereas Larry was on a level with a scrofulous water rat.

There were no tragic farewells. Ida put on her cap one night when Larry was at home playing solitaire by candlelight and told him she was going over to Hanley's for a pint of ale for their supper. She took with her, to make her exit realistic, a big blue-bordered mug. And she never came back.

Larry suffered a good deal because in his cringing way he had been in love with Ida's amber eyes and the little hollows in the corners of her mouth. As the hours passed he had ample time to recall quite clearly many other intimate details, which tortured him abominably. He could not face the true reason why Ida had left him, and he groped about for some more satisfying explanation.

Perhaps she wanted more money? Women like frills and shoes and such trash. He wondered whether, if he had more money, she would come back to him some day. Of course she would. Well, if money was the thing he would get it—in the only way he knew. Petty larceny was too slow, he saw that now. He must tackle bigger game. He would have to stage a hold-up, stage it alone so that he might keep all the loot, and he would have to kill.

His despair gave him courage. He put his clasp knife in his pocket and went out. If she wanted money he'd get it at once.

A pearly gray mist had crept up Hobson Bay and rolled through the streets, muffling the sounds of the city. Hugging the walls, Larry went down a series of narrow lanes until he came to a broader street where trolleys clanged through the fog and the light of the street lamps was supplemented by naphtha flares on the hucksters' barrows drawn up by the pavement.

On the corner, blazing with light behind its frosted glass panes, stood the Murray Hotel, where a man fresh from the backblocks might find the special form of oblivion adapted to his nature.

Here Larry waited, and the moisture on the sidewalk seeped through the broken-down soles of his shoes. At last the door opened, and a man swaggered out puffing at a huge cigar. For a moment he wavered and then turned up-town, hurrying along with bent head. By his walk Larry knew him to be a stranger to crowds and pavements.

Trotting along on the other side of the street, Larry kept abreast until they came to a long, dreary stretch of loft buildings and warehouses; then he edged across the road as stealthily as a prowling cat. When he was within ten yards of the man he opened his knife and nerved himself for the last swift rush.

Then the man wheeled about in his tracks and snapped out:

"Bungled, you idiot! Bungled! Couldn't track down a— Here, stop it, you fool! You'll get hurt."

Larry squealed and closed in with a leap. What happened to him he never quite knew. His jaw seemed to be thrust back into his brain and there to crack open. It didn't hurt at all except in his eyes, which were dazzled by a blinding flash of white light. After that came a black emptiness. He went down and stayed down.

Centuries later when he came out of the void his conqueror was sitting on the curbstone beside his head.

"Feel better?" the man inquired.

Larry swore feebly and gingerly felt his jaw, which he found to be very much as it had been before.

"Don't swear," the stranger went on. "No sense in it. Waste of — good time. I never swear."

He jerked his cigar out of his mouth and blew smoke and words into Larry's face.

"What the — made you try that stunt?" he demanded. "Couldn't you see I was sober, am sober, more's the pity?"

Larry, still dazed, after one long look at the man's face tried to crawl away. The will to do great things had left him; he was sick and very frightened. He found himself jerked back into a sitting position and his arm held just above the elbow in a grip that went through his flabby muscles almost to the bone.

"Leggo," he begged. "I didn't mean no harm. So help me— I'm a poor bloke what's—"

"Shush! You're a poor liar you mean. That's nearer the mark."

"Leggo," insisted Larry. "You're hurting me. —! What're you playing at, anyhow?"

The man laughed.

"Well, I suppose you are the injured party. But, look here, bide a wee. I don't know a sober individual in this — city. Come and keep me company. That is,

unless you have some prior engagement?"

"What d'you mean—keep you company?" snarled Larry. "Go on. Have me locked up, you big—"

"Don't be so personal," cautioned the man. "And, sonny, I wouldn't have you locked up, not for all the silver in Broke Hill. By — I'd sooner wring your neck than have you put behind bars. Prison's no good—no." A pause. "Well, want to join me?"

"You go to — and leave me alone."

"Food, drink—" the stranger ticked off the items on nubblly fingers—"a decent smoke. I'll throw in a shave if you like."

"You go to —!" sullenly repeated Larry.

"You've said that just once too often, but I like your strong spirit, so you're coming whether you want to or not." The man jumped to his feet and raised Larry by the coat collar. "Now, don't argue, or I'll pole-ax you. I'm sober and melancholic. Had nineteen whiskys and still got sand in the back of my throat! I want company, I tell you."

So it came about that Larry reluctantly accompanied Mr. Ezra Calvin, lately come down from the mining-camp at Stafford, and the course of his life was quite completely changed.

CHAPTER III

GOLD FEVER

STUPENDOUS things happened to Larry that night, miraculous, absurd things, and they followed each other at such a bewildering pace that he had no time either to resist or to think. Instead of being hauled off to the nearest police station he found himself dragged through the portals of Scott's Hotel where, in the lobby, well-dressed people gaped at him and he glared back from beneath the broken peak of his cap. Then he was thrust into a gilded cage, which changed in the twinkling of an eye into an elevator manipulated by a small boy in a skin-tight uniform.

"Blimey!" thought Larry. "And what next?"

Because the upward motion made him dizzy he closed his eyes and reopened them only after a long interval to find himself in a strange palatial room. There he was roughly handled—stripped, shaved, bathed

in scalding hot water, frozen beneath an icy shower, dressed in a clean gray flannel shirt and a Turkish towel. He came to rest at last in a deep leather arm-chair, where he made himself as small as possible while he puffed at a cigar that had somehow or other come all lighted between his lips.

He stole a long, careful glance at his tormentor, who, having torn off his collar, was shouting orders into a telephone. Larry made himself smaller than ever inside the flannel shirt and scowled. He did not like the looks of Mr. Ezra Calvin; in fact, he found him positively repellent.

Calvin was lean and tough as whipcord and possessed extraordinarily large, calloused hands. His face apparently had been carelessly carved with an ax out of a piece of well-seasoned mahogany, for the features were irregular and nondescript, ranging from a huge, bald forehead by way of a snub nose to a small, firm, pointed chin. His mouth was wide and good-humored, and something had once happened to his right ear, whose upper part had been broken and drooped ever so slightly. Notwithstanding these defects, his countenance conveyed a very marked degree of strength, determination and competence.

He wore a suit of funereal black and pointed brown shoes. On the bed-post rested his hat, a homburg of uncertain vintage. Larry, unaccustomed to such sartorial experiments, found the man ridiculous and cursed himself for his clumsiness until he recalled the prodigious power concealed beneath the baggy coat.

Having concluded his telephone conversation, Calvin turned to his guest.

"You don't look happy," he remarked pleasantly. "Jaw still ache?"

"What's the big idea?" growled Larry. "Making a fool out of me like this! Where's my clothes?"

"I take it your jaw does not ache. Your clothes, I am glad to say, have gone—never to return. We'll have a new outfit along in a few minutes. Do you good."

"It's all right for you to make fun of a poor guy like me. Yus! Lording it over the likes of me just because I ain't got a penny."

"I'm broke too," Calvin grinned. "This is my last splendid night in the city."

"Who're you trying to kid?"

"No one. It's the truth."

And it was the truth. A month earlier

Calvin had come down from Stafford with almost two thousand pounds worth of gold. Half of it he had unimaginatively invested in government bonds the day after his arrival, and then forgotten. The balance he had spent as wisely as he saw fit in search of what he called a good time, a thing he never quite found until he was back again in the bush. His chief difficulty, as he explained to Larry, was his inability to drink himself into a state of blissful insensibility.

"I'm not normal," he complained. "I'm a freak. I suppose you saw me come out of the Murray? Well, I went down there to look up a bunch I used to know when I was working Balarrat way. D'you know: They're happy now, absolutely paralyzed—and here I am cold sober though I did my best. I promise you I tried hard."

He patted Larry's shoulder and said encouragingly—

"We'll try again."

A waiter appeared with food and bottles. Larry ate and drank. Gradually his hatred of the world dissolved, and in its stead he found himself tearfully bemoaning his fate. He spoke of Ida. The room was swaying about him, and all he could see distinctly was Calvin's shiny forehead reflecting the light of the electric bulbs.

"If I had a chance to run straight," he said, "why, I'd go straight, that's sure. But who wants a poor cuss like me?"

"The city," declared Calvin, "is a death-trap, a nice death-trap perhaps, but a death-trap—" He broke off and applauded. "By —, I'm repeating myself. Congratulations! You're holding out splendidly, splendidly, splendidly— Oh, shush!"

"But look here, my admiration for your tenacity is growing every second. Why not come with me to Stafford? The air is as clean and dry as a bone—do your lungs good. They wheeze, you know. And there's gold."

"Gold," repeated Larry, hunting for Calvin's eyes in the gyrating room. "Gold!"

"Lashings of it. Got to work for it, sweat, go hungry, go thirsty. Got to keep going till you're ready to drop and then keep going some more. No time to stick other people in the back. No—no time to stick other people— Calvin," he admonished himself, "shut up or don't be redundant."

"Where's the gold?" asked Larry, gripping the arms of his tilting chair.

"North of the Cooloo Ridge," Calvin

seemed to shout. "Nuggets! Big as your fist—bigger—big as your head! Want to come? I'll take you."

"Cooloo," muttered Larry. "Cooloo Bridge. Gold!"

"I'll cure you up there. Make you strong—stop that wheeze in your rusty bellows. I start in the morning. Train for Horsham leaves at six. Are you coming?"

Larry's chair was tilting more and more and he was sliding off, sliding beneath the table. Before he passed out of sight he called out—

"Yes!"

And he dozed off to the sound of Calvin's voice booming the one word—

"Gold!"

Hardly had his head touched the floor, so it seemed to him, before Calvin was propping him up again and holding his head beneath the shower. Then they were off, going through empty streets to the station. Before the train pulled out Larry was asleep again and only awoke hours later when a guard shouted, "Buangor!" and they passed within sight of Mount Cole.

CHAPTER IV

SOIS BELLE ET TAIS TOI

WHEN the train ground to a stop Larry's first impulse was to bolt from the carriage, but one look at Buangor made him change his mind. In those days Buangor was a water-tower, a wool-shed and a dusty track winding away across low hills. And there was nothing else, except on the platform three farmers in overalls woodenly watching the guard throw boxes at their feet. So Larry stayed on, furtively observing Mr. Ezra Calvin, who was talking in monosyllables to two other gentlemen sprawling all over the seats.

The conversation was aimless. Larry closed his eyes and swore bitterly, albeit beneath his breath. He now detested Calvin and, quite overlooking his own attempt at murder, felt that he had been disgracefully tricked. He had been hit on the jaw, kidnapped and deprived of his one means of protection, his knife. He spent several minutes firmly fixing in his mind the things he would do to Calvin at the first opportunity.

One of the travelers, a man with a straggling beard, remarked—

"Stafford, it's a — of a hole, aint it?"

"So-so," answered Calvin. "Might be worse."

"Almost played out?"

"Looks that way."

"Moving on?"

"Not yet."

"Um."

"Ah."

Silence for about ten miles. Larry squirmed uncomfortably. He wasn't used to ten-mile silences. He blurted out:

"What's that you said about Stafford being played out? What's in your mind anyhow? I don't like it; for fair I don't like it. You told me Stafford was full of gold, and now you say——"

Three pairs of eyes contemplated him ruminatively.

"Jackaroo?" inquired the man with the beard.

"Yep," answered Calvin. "Newchum. Picked him up last night. Need a helper."

"Lost Shorty?"

"Yep. Got shot up."

"Ah."

"I say," broke in Larry, hot and uncomfortable beneath the unwavering scrutiny. "What the——"

"You heard," said Calvin between yawns. "Shorty's dead—you take Shorty's place. Do you good," he grinned. "Get some fresh air in your lungs; they still wheeze."

"If you think," snarled Larry, making himself very small in his corner, "if you think I'm anybody's — helper you've got another guess coming. Why, last night——"

"If you don't like it you can walk back," suddenly snapped Calvin, his mouth closing like a steel trap. "Folks, I offered him a chance to get away from his muck and live clean—and listen to him! Listen!"

"There's the window," observed the man who had not yet spoken.

"He'll pull through," Calvin reassured his companions. "He kept me company last night, so I might as well do him a good turn."

"Mm, you're a queer bird, Calvin."

"You can't pull this sort of stuff," protested Larry. "You——"

Calvin's face was thrust within an inch of his own, and he looked into two amazingly bright eyes. He shriveled up, vanished behind his cap.

"Shut up," ordered Calvin. "When you're tired, clear out. I'm not keeping

you. But you'd better ride as far as Horsham and see the country."

After a while the bearded traveler remarked—

"Fellow up my way's got a new binder."

"So?"

"'Merican binder—works well."

"Ah."

The shadows at the foot of the mountains deepened. Soon the train was rushing through darkness and Larry's companions slept in grotesque attitudes; their mouths hung open; they snored. It would then have been easy for Larry to escape, but his brain had conjured up a more subtle form of retaliation with which to confound his enemies.

For a long time, sitting as still as a mouse, he listened to their regular breathing and watched for the least flutter of an eyelid. Then with great care he leaned over, extended one dirty but supple hand and extracted from Calvin's inside vest pocket a slim wad of five pound notes. It was really ridiculously easy, like stealing buttons off a wax model.

Next he explored the pockets of the bearded man and possessed himself of eight gold sovereigns, a pair of tweezers and a watch. The last traveler was not quite so easy to relieve, for he had fallen over sideways and seemed to be asleep on all his pockets at once, but Larry, grinning widely, was able to locate and extract a little box, which contained a diamond solitaire. Larry almost chuckled aloud at the thought of this ponderous clodhopper slipping a ring on a girl's finger.

"Yea, duckey," he whispered. "Won't she be wild?"

Then he transferred himself agilely into the corridor, closed the compartment door behind him and waited with beating heart for the train to slow down. After a while, growing anxious, he decided to put as much distance as possible between himself and Calvin. He lurched forward only to enter the baggage van where a garrulous conductor talked union politics while Larry grew hot and cold.

"What's next stop?" inquired Larry.

"'Orsham, in 'nother thirty-five minutes."

"—struth!" Larry ejaculated. "Nothing afore that?"

"No." The conductor looked at his visitor with fresh interest. "By the way, 'ave I seen your ticket?"

"Yes—way back. Bloke in next carriage has 'em both, his and mine."

"And where are you booked to?"

"Horsham," Larry admitted nervously.

"You see, I didn't know we'd come so fast. Mighty fast train, this."

"Fellow what's taking care of your ticket—what's he like?"

"You know him. He's got a broken ear and a head like a pear turned upside-down."

"Oh, Calvin?"

"That's him."

"I remember now. Well, so long."

Larry departed, conscious of intense moisture gathering between his shoulder-blades.

"Wisht I had my knife," he growled as he steadied himself. "I'd show 'em; I would at that. I'll go all the way back and maybe I can drop off when she slows down a bit."

And in the corridor he staggered upon Calvin who greeted him pleasantly.

"Been exploring?"

"Oh, up and down. Couldn't sleep."

"We'll be in soon."

"I suppose so," choked Larry, nearly overcome by a desire to claw out Calvin's eyes.

"Better come with me to Stafford."

"—! You and Stafford! What do I get out of it, eh? I'm going back—"

"Before you go," Calvin suggested mildly, "would you mind replacing the articles you extracted from the pockets of my friends?"

"You saw?" gurgled Larry.

"Yes, I saw. You're so clumsy! You shouldn't tickle a man like that. It's not professional. I'll have my wad first, please."

He counted it, pushed it into his pocket, and jerked his thumb toward the door.

"Now put the rest back where it belongs. If you wake them up you'll create a bad impression—might get hurt."

So back went the diamond solitaire, the tweezers, the watch and the eight gold sovereigns.

"O.K." said Calvin. "Now, my dexterous friend, I want to talk to you. Will you remember that I am not the Salvation Army, the Y. M. C. A. nor a prison chaplain. I don't give a hoot what happens to you, and at present you'd be better off dead. Don't try any more legerdemain—that's Harvard for picking pockets—either on myself or my friends. Be good and be quiet. As Beaudelaire expresses it so well, '*Sois belle et tais toi.*' I'd like to give you a leg-up

because you're such a miserable shrimp; if you don't want it—beat it. I'll help you through the window if you like."

"Have a heart," pleaded Larry, stunned by the sudden outburst of eloquence. "I don't know what's up, guv'nor, nor what I'm headed for. What're you going to do if I do go on to this here Stafford?"

"Make you work; pay you wages; feed you. Give you a chance to meet some of the best men on earth. That's about all."

"I don't know a thing about mining. Say, d'you think one of them coves would give a fellow a job in Horsham?"

"Ask 'em," urged Calvin, not at all ruffled by Larry's lack of gratefulness.

"Know how to shear?" asked the man with the solitaire, lacing his boots and yawning.

"Know how to milk? Can you use a separator? Ever seen a plow?" inquired the bearded one, looking at his watch.

Larry shook his head.

"Better go with Calvin," they both said together, and there the matter ended.

"'Orsham!" cried the conductor. "End of the line!"

"First chance I get," Larry promised himself, "I'll do him in proper. It's a frame-up, this is."

There was a hotel at Horsham and there they stayed for the night. It occurred to Larry that if he arose at dawn he might escape, but early rising was an ingrained habit among the citizens of the township, and after a lamp-lit breakfast he found himself hoisted on to the back of a big-barreled horse and meekly followed Calvin away from the last outpost of civilization he was to see for a very long time.

As he jolted through the hotel gate the man with the beard shouted after him—

"Thanks for the watch, Skinney!"

A great laugh went up from the crowded porch.

"Did he know?" asked Larry, looking anxiously at Calvin.

"Lordy me, yes! Knew all along. Great joke, but don't do it again. Mind that horse!" His voice grew sharp. "Don't saw at his mouth like that. Sit still!"

Thereafter Larry sat as still as possible and tried not to fall off. Before noon he was beginning to wish he had the courage to fall off, but the black snakes he had seen among the rocks deterred him. And he was very thirsty.

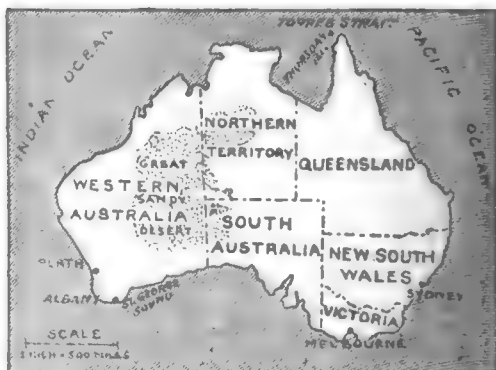
CHAPTER V

DROUGHT

AT HORSHAM the Wimmera River bends northward and winds at first across grasslands beneath the shade of great trees, but the grass gives way to scrub and the river shrinks to a thread, growing ever shallower until it loses itself in the waste places of the Karkaroo Desert among salt marches and sand-hills. And in Summer, when the hot winds blow for days and the drought blights the land, the bed of the river is empty; not even a pool is left.

The earth cracks open, the scorched grass turns to yellow straw and the trees are stripped of their leaves. Then men curse the empty, roaring sky and stand by helplessly while their sheep and their cattle whiten the ground with their bones. Then, too, across the face of the land move dun-colored clouds of dust, swirling and twisting like so many malignant ghosts.

But the drought has no effect on the mallee scrub, which is changeless and eternal. The track winds between dense olive-



green walls, monotonous as death itself, while overhead the wind rattles through the thick, stiff leaves. A choking film of dust seeps down through the foliage and dances in the shafts of sunlight which stab the half-light of the trail.

And into this inferno rode Larry Machin close on Calvin's heels. While they had followed the bed of the river it had occurred to Larry that he might, quite soon, be able to escape. But no opportunity arose, and once in the blind depths of the scrub all such ambitions left him. He was lost, and he knew it. He understood with a shock the

emptiness of the land they were crossing and his own helplessness. He suffered and snarled. The dust clogged his throat and filled his eyes, his lungs ached, and the glare of the sun had burnt raw the skin on his face and hands.

He learned to drink black tea out of a billycan and to eat cindery johnnycakes. He learned how to slip the bit into a horse's mouth and how to adjust a saddle. But he learned all these things imperfectly and despised them, despised his teacher. He had been "framed" and at the first opportunity he would even the score. In the mean time he made himself as unpleasant as possible.

Calvin watched him without comment, except for one sudden outburst, when Larry in the middle of the night left his blanket and crawled over to the water bag. Thirst to him was a novel torture, and he drank and drank, letting the water slop out of his mouth and run down his chin and neck.

"That," Calvin said the next morning, "is the one unpardonable sin. You've got to find these things out for yourself, but don't do that again. If you do, I am sorry to say, you die."

"Lashings left," grumbled Larry. "Lashings."

"What about the horses?"

"Oh, blimey, what's a — horse?"

"If you go on like this, my young friend," sighed Calvin, his voice growing lower and lower, "you are going to meet with a sudden and violent end—at my hands. You understand? I am beginning to believe your case hopeless, but worse things than you have made good. Can't judge you yet. But for pity's sake don't experiment."

"Aw, you can't tell me. There's enough water there—"

On Calvin's dome-like forehead veins suddenly stood out in thick blue cords. He went over to Larry and laid both hands on his shoulders.

"My boy," he said gently, "I am not an exterminator, and dock-rats aren't my specialty, but you *must* try to get one or two decent notions inside your — block."

"You start calling me names," began Larry, tricked by the gentle voice.

The hands on his shoulders ground into him, almost wrenched him apart. He screamed with terror.

"All right," Calvin went on crisply.

"You'll do. We'll water the horses and push on. Until we come to a well you and I can go thirsty."

So they rode thirty miles out of their way to dig below the surface of the Wimmera and only reached the sun-bitten desolation of Cooloo Ridge two days later, by which time Larry was suffering from the ravages of prickly heat and was reduced by hardships to the point of exhaustion.

The emptiness of the sandy desert seen from the top of the ridge drew an amazed oath from his lips.

"Blimey," he choked. "What's this?"

"Desert," snapped Calvin. "Keep your mouth shut, for it's beginning to blow."

It was high noon. A burning wind scooped the sand from among the rocks and sent it scurrying across the barren land in loosely flapping sheets. A shuddering whisper seemed to come out of this wilderness, a thin, creasing sound as the sand rustled and moved and swirled.

The ride became a torment. Blinded and choking, Larry forgot everything save that he must not let himself fall out of the saddle on to the moving ground beneath his horse's hoofs. As in a nightmare he dimly saw a bleaching skull staring up at him out of shadowy sockets; then he was lost and struggling through a hot, gritty darkness, where his mount reared and crashed through the brittle ribs of some dead beast.

Calvin kept close beside him, steadied him, cheered him on. Deep down beneath his present agony Larry resented his companion's calm acceptance of this torture. It seemed unnatural that a man should not whimper and complain, and he imagined, therefore, that he alone was being made to suffer. Even this feeling at last died away, and he was conscious of nothing but his thirst and his sickening fear.

CHAPTER VI

LARRY MEETS A FRIEND

HOW or when they came to the Sunrise Inn Larry could not tell, but the jolting ceased all at once and he stumbled into a long, low room where in the semiobscurity he heard the sound of human voices rising above the scraping rush of the sand on the corrugated-iron roof. He found himself in a chair, and some one was holding a mug of beer to his mouth. Beer! It was flat, stale

and warm, but he drank it greedily and choked his thanks.

"My eyes," he said hoarsely. "Can't open them."

"Don't rub 'em, you silly ass," ordered one of the voices. "Wait a bit and wash 'em out."

They bathed his face, sparingly, and the smarting, burning sensation became more bearable. Then the beer took hold of his brain, and he dozed off, his head on his chest, but the voices still reached him quite clearly, as if in a lucid dream, even while he snored.

He heard Calvin come in and order drinks. When the conversation dropped to whispers he knew they were discussing him.

"Who's he?"

"New chum," said Calvin. "Melbourne."

"Soft, ain't he?"

"He'll toughen up. He's got loads of guts."

"Didn't you see the snorter coming up?" queried another man. "Thought you 'ad more sense, Calvin. Why didn't you wait on t'other side of the ridge. Never 'eard of such a thing!"

"Well," Calvin laughed, "I wanted to see what *he* was made of. Wasn't any too sure, but he's O. K."

Larry was not accustomed to praise, nor had he expected any from such a quarter. Dimly it occurred to him that it might be a desirable thing to show these "swaggies," these "diggers," that he could equal them at their own game. If Calvin vouched for him at the end of a week, what might he not be able to accomplish in a month's time? Still he had no love for Calvin, still he hated him, but in a different fashion.

He snored on until a fresh voice joined in the slow discussion and he stiffened in his chair, even though with instinctive cunning he kept his eyes closed and went on breathing heavily. It was a fat, thick voice, slightly ironical. Its possessor seemed in no wise disturbed by the heat or the storm.

"Well, Calvin," he drawled. "Back again! Glad to see you. Is that scabrous black fellow getting you all the refreshment your soul craves?"

"Thanks—yes. Can you give us a flop for the night?"

"Absolutely, that's my business. Why didn't we see you when you left Stafford?"

"Oh, I went out by way of Bimbogrie. Thought I'd look over the country that way. Then I went south along the creek."

"A long way round! It strikes me you're neglecting the old firm. Isn't our hospitality all that could be desired?"

"Nothing wrong with the place, Denton," Calvin laughed, "but I've got no habits, only impulses, and I had an impulse to see Bimbogrie, so I went."

Decidedly, thought Larry, he did not like the sound of this Denton's voice. It was too familiar, too entirely familiar. Somewhere, sometime or other he had heard it before. But "Denton"—that wasn't the name. In Sydney perhaps? Or that pub at Geelong? Or the gambling den in Cha Ling's cellar? Somewhere— It was associated in Larry's mind with a smell of cordite, a pall of smoke and a dead man.

Denton was saying in a rumbling whisper:

"You pick queer birds, Calvin, queer birds. That new chum of yours—what made you bring him out here? I'd know him ten miles away. Dock-rat. He'll stick you or put a bullet——"

"That," said Calvin, "is my lookout. Hil Boy, fill this —— glass."

"Maybe. Far be it from me to interfere. You certainly work in mysterious ways, Calvin. Look at that bloke now. Can't stand a bit of a snorter, can't stand a pint of beer, can't stand the heat. It's not fair to him, and he's dangerous. I tell you I know the breed."

"So do we all. But he's going to see this through. I'll bet you anything you like he's a different man inside six months."

"It's none of my interfering business," admitted Denton with a chuckle. "The moral welfare of Stafford leaves me comparatively icy, but I have had a good deal of experience of such—eh—characters. Yes, sir. And let me tell you they're unwholesome. Some time back I visited a filthy place called the 'Mitre' in Woolloomooloo. A lurid place! Went out of curiosity with a friend of mine. Gunmen by the score, regiments of 'em in there, and I rather fancy——"

"Yes," put in Calvin, "I know. And if you started digging into my past, or that of 'Long Bill,' or Jeff, or 'Bottlenose Mike's,' all here assembled, I'll bet you might find a good many charming anecdotes of the lurid variety."

"It's the custom out here, Denton," Calvin's voice became incisive, "not to bother much about a man's past. It doesn't pay, and what you hear is mostly lies anyhow."

You may be as white as snow, but I advise you to keep it to yourself. Do I make myself understood? And does anybody object to the presence in our midst of Larry Machin? Do you, Jeff?"

"Naw," said Jeff, pensively spitting down between his boots. "It's all one to me."

"Boy," yelled Calvin. "Fill up these — glasses!"

Larry peered beneath his lashes at the man called Denton. He knew him now. The Mitre gave him the needful clue. The Mitre—of course, that was the place. Denton had then been known as Mitchell and had been working among cattlemen and squatters. Big stuff, just inside the law. He was a clever man, too clever. He over-shot himself; tried to blackmail Manning, the New South Wales wool baron. Manning tracked him down and unearthed him at the Mitre, a shoddy, dim place where Denton was treated like a prince by all the little fellows. Manning burst in, red in the face, almost apoplectic, waving a great automatic in his hairy fist. And then Denton had dodged behind Larry's back, caught him up and used him as a shield while he reached for his gun.

Larry could still hear Manning's bellow: "You — — — coward! You——"

Denton fired three times. A stain spread and glistened on Manning's white shirt-front, and one drop of blood trickled down over the pearl studs before the man crumpled up. Then Denton threw Larry on top of the corpse and bolted before the smoke cleared.

And here was Denton taking cover in the backblocks, running an inn in the Karkaroo Desert! There was a reward of five hundred pounds for his capture, dead or alive. Five hundred pounds!

For a long time Larry pretended to doze in his chair, afraid to think, afraid to move, trembling lest Denton recognize him and treat him as Manning had been treated. But the strain became unbearable. He opened his eyes and stretched his aching arms above his head. A cheer greeted what Calvin called his "resurrection," and he was escorted to the bar, where he met the diggers and, last of all, Denton.

The latter shook hands cordially.

"Glad to meet you," he chuckled. "Calvin tells us you're going to try your luck out this way. Hope you'll like it—and pat-

ronize the Sunrise a bit more than Calvin does. He's a piker."

Larry grinned and mumbled and drank more raw whisky than was good for him. For Denton did not remember him! It drummed in his ears. He was safe!

He sat silent and observant when they all trooped over to the long table where supper was served by two black women. He was safe! He would show these men that Calvin was right; he would make good.

"Better flop for the night," Calvin suggested a little later. "Long day ahead of us tomorrow."

Obediently Larry flopped on a canvas cot in a narrow little room at the end of a corridor lit by a smoking oil-lamp. Through the thin partition he heard the voices grow louder and louder as the evening wore on and Calvin burst into song—

"I was born at Paramatta——"

It annoyed Larry that he should be lying in a dark room like a good little child while the others drank themselves into a stupor. Why should he have been shunted out of the way, put to bed? He would show 'em. Calvin couldn't pull any tricks like that. The din became impossible. Larry dragged his aching body out of bed and groped around for his coat.

He turned to find himself staring full at Denton who stood, candle in hand, in the doorway looking at him with a broad smile on his face.

"Don't go," rumbled Denton. "Sit down again. I'd like to talk to you."

"Where's Calvin?" asked Larry, his teeth chattering.

"Drunk—helpless, the whole bunch of 'em." He chuckled. "A day like this makes them thirsty. They're lying about on the floor by this time."

"I can't sleep, so I'll go on out——"

"Sit down," repeated Denton, and after a short pause he added softly, "What the — are you doing here?"

"Came up with Calvin—going to work for him—you heard."

"Mm. You're a mighty long way from Melbourne—Machin."

"I suppose so," Larry agreed hopelessly.

"Queer you should drop in here." He hitched up his pants by the belt and grinned when Larry, at the gesture, seemed to recoil. "That's all right," he laughed. "I don't tote a gun in the house."

"So you——"

"Yes. Oh, I spotted you right enough. Couldn't forget your handsome face. I'm Mitchell." He sighed reflectively. "But what's puzzling me is to know what to do with you."

"Blimey!" choked Larry. "Honest, I didn't know——"

"Of course you knew. Don't be a fool. If you squeak you might make it unpleasant for me. On the other hand, for you it would be disastrous—like Manning."

"I won't squeal," promised Larry. "If I can get back to Melbourne——"

"No, you don't. You're not going that way, that's certain."

"But I tell you: It happened like this. Calvin picked me up——"

Denton shook with laughter as he listened to the recital of Larry's misfortunes.

"So you don't think much of friend Calvin," he murmured. "Well, no more do I. He's a bit too slick for me. But——" he checked himself—"that's not my business. He pays for what he gets and so far as I'm concerned the matter ends there."

"Calvin ain't so bad," Larry was surprised to hear himself say.

"No? What have you to thank him for? Face facts. This isn't your kind of life. You'll crack up in no time."

"I wish I could get away!"

"And that's the trouble. You can't. You'd get drunk and you'd talk. No, you're going on. There's that five hundred pound reward. You'd sell your own mother for five hundred pounds."

"I——"

"Oh, shut up. Let me think. I'll have to let you go on with Calvin because I'm sitting pretty and don't want to make any more quick changes. But——"

He rubbed his chin with his knuckles and frowned.

"Aw, look; we're both playing the same kind of game, as you might say. You leave me alone and I'll leave you——"

"That's what you say now. I'd trust you as much as I'd trust a black snake."

"You don't have to worry. Give me a chance."

"Wait, I've got it. About that reward: I've still some friends in Melbourne. I'll let 'em know you're here and if you open your mouth too wide they'll get you. Not today or tomorrow perhaps, but sometime or other they'll let you have it. Now, if

you do keep quiet and work with me you can make a darn sight more'n five hundred pounds—easy."

He grinned.

"I did treat you pretty rough that time at the Mitre, but that's over and forgotten. What I want you to do for the present is this: Go on to Stafford, keep your eyes and ears open, and when anybody leaves the camp by any other trail than this one let me know. It'll be dead simple. If I pull anything off you'll get your share."

"How does the idea work out?"

"None of your business just now. I'll tell you later on if you don't double-cross me—see? No risks for you at all. Just have to keep me wised up. I'll fix it so one of the black boys gets to you every two-three days."

"Sounds all right."

"It is—mark my word. But if you go wrong just once I'll not give you another chance, you know that."

"I'm on," whispered Larry.

Denton sighed and picked up his candle.

"That's fine," he wheezed. "Now I must go and see what the bunch is doing. They're toning down."

In the passage he met Calvin.

"I was born at Paramatta," began Calvin. "I was born—look here, Straight and Narrow, if you value your immortal soul and your ample girth I would suggest that you leave Larry strictly alone."

"Just wanted to see if he was O. K. He had a touch of the sun, I should say."

"Denton," said Calvin. "I tell you now as man to man, because your beer is foul, I do not like you overmuch; in fact, I am rather inclined to believe you are a dangerous fellow. Shorty passed this way some months ago, and Shorty was found a little later very much the worse for wear. I don't want to lose Larry."

"Next thing you know," chuckled Denton, "you'll be seeing snakes. Go to bed, Calvin, go to bed!"

"Certainly," agreed Calvin, hanging to the doorpost. "I shall go to bed as soon as I have examined Larry for wounds and contusions, and not before."

"Larry," he called out loudly, "are you still alive, you scoundrel?"

"Yes," mumbled Larry. "I'm asleep."

"Denton been tucking you in?"

"He ain't been near me that I know of."

"No? Ha!" Calvin laughed loudly.

"Then I have been seeing Denton's ghost. If I see it again I shall fill it with lead. Sure you're O. K., Larry, my lad?"

An unintelligible grunt answered him, and he concluded:

"I'll camp right here until morning. Might see that ghost again."

And a heavy silence settled upon the Sunrise Inn, a silence disturbed only by the snores rising from the barroom floor.

Later Denton, checking up his receipts, was annoyed to find that he had only acquired one pound and ten shillings of Calvin's money, and he addressed himself mournfully to his henchman, Long Butler, who sat on the window sill smoking his short clay pipe through his whiskers.

"Calvin bothers me," he said with a shake of the head. "You never can tell if he's sober or tight, and I'm beginning to believe he knows more about you and me than you might expect. He's a nuisance."

"Might get 'im t'morrow?"

"That won't do. We'll have to wait. He's flat just now. What's the use? He gave us the slip last time. And there's Machin. By the way, Butler, keep an eye on him. He may be useful, but I don't trust him. If he says one word he's got to be fixed and fixed quick."

"A'right," agreed Butler. "I'd like to have a shot at Calvin myself. He looks at you funny-like, as if he knew all about everything. Next time he pulls out, if I find out which way he travels——"

"That," said Denton, "is where Machin comes in."

CHAPTER VII

BLIND LUCK

LARRY was not cursed with a gift for introspection, and though his outlook upon life changed, it changed so slowly that he was quite unaware of the fact. Even while he still thought himself a predatory Melbourne gangster, temporarily marooned among his traditional enemies—a furtive lion in a den of ferocious Daniels—he was really fast acquiring all the characteristics of the men he despised.

He could talk not too foolishly of deep leads, gutters, bottoms and reefs. He blistered and calloused his hands on the handle of a pick. He could tell at a glance the difference between mica and gold. Hard work and coarse food toughened his slack

muscles; the sun coated with brown his sallow skin. He was amazed to discover that the diggers he met at Stafford drank no other beverage than water for months on end. In fact, they preferred water, looking upon beer and whisky as the ultimate rewards of a successful career.

But these were superficial differences. Larry acquired also a new moral code, which was primitive and easy to grasp: There were no locks on the doors of the shacks; no one was allowed to go hungry; no one was expected to steal. You could curse a man so long as you wore a protecting smile, but you might not insult him in anger unless you were prepared to "put up your dukes," and fight. Even then you had to fight according to certain absurd rules which tended to prolong the conflict. The use of a knife or other weapon was deprecated.

As a rule, however, there were few fights, the prospectors were boisterously cheerful and good-natured. They kept their troubles to themselves, and when the day's work was done acted with a lack of decorum which, for a long time, disgusted Larry and made him feel very superior and blasé—until some of this blaséness was joyfully knocked out of him by "Old Pop" Hagen, who afterwards propped him up and stuck a cigaret between his puffy lips.

"He's coming on, is the new chum," Hagen later told Calvin. "He'll make a fair and proper little fighter, and if he isn't yellow you and me can get ready to take a couple of back seats pretty soon."

Even when Stafford began to peter out there were few complaints. The camp lay in a depression between two folds in the desert rock. At one end of this valley a spring gushed out, ran for a little more than a mile between green, tree-clad slopes and then vanished again where the hills opened and flattened out, and the sand sucked the stream dry. In this narrow strip there were giant oaks and eucalyptus and flowering shrubs and great ferns, but at the crest of the rise, as if by some magic, the luxuriance stopped dead, and as far as the eye could see there was nothing but waste land, covered with a matting of porcupine grass, where an abominable death awaited the unwary traveler.

Here for eight swift months Larry worked with Calvin and bided his time. His relations with Denton had become fixed and

devoid of all excitement. He would send word by a black boy that such and such a digger was leaving for the coast by such and such a trail—and then forget all about it until he received a small bundle of notes, his share of the transaction. For Denton knew how to spend his money, always with the mental reservation that when it suited his purpose he could get it all back again.

Such transactions were outside Larry's immediate circle of interests; they took up none of his time and it never occurred to him that his conduct might be foul and loathsome. Because he was fairly quiet and unassuming Stafford accepted him as a deserving "new chum" and did its best to help him along the rough road all novices had to travel. Only when he became self-assertive in his new found strength and knowledge did they literally sit upon him and teach him the rudiments of manners.

Through it all his relations with Calvin remained unaltered chiefly because Calvin had struck a patch of bad luck. They put down two shafts on the western slope and found hardly enough gold to cover their expenses, while two hundred yards away Old Pop Hagen, scratching about barely six feet below the surface, dug out a seventeen-pound nugget and crowed for a week before he could be induced to totter down to Melbourne where it could more easily be transmuted into Three Star brandy.

"We're a fine outfit," Larry complained. "Look at the others making a pile of money, and we just grub about in the rock. It makes me sick; it does for fair."

"Stafford's about played out," Calvin admitted. "We can't all strike it rich. We'll move on one of these days."

"And look what you promised me when I came along! Nothing to show for all these months! Cripes! The way you talked you might think we was going to turn into millionaires!"

"We sha'n't starve just yet," promised Calvin. "No fear of that happening—and you've had your pay straight along."

Larry, thinking of the three hundred-odd pounds bulging in his belt, grunted disgustedly—

"Sweet lot of good that'll do me."

"Well, what do you want to do?" asked Calvin. "Do you think you know enough to strike out alone?"

The idea held Larry in check for a moment, and then he burst out:

"I do. This ain't good enough. I'm wasting time hanging around here. There's that ledge I said we ought to try months ago——"

Calvin caught Larry's hands and shook them, beaming all over his ugly face.

"My boy," he declared, "you're made and I win! I knew you'd want to break away some day. I'm perfectly satisfied. Now beat it—go stand on your own hind legs. You can have what you need in the way of tools and so forth. And if you get into trouble call me in."

So they separated, and Larry, to emphasize his independence, built himself a bark shack beneath the trees at the top end of the valley close to the spring. He started off with high hopes, but three blank weeks quickly disheartened him. Of course Calvin had only let him go because there was no gold left. It was just another underhand trick. Moodily he loafed along the hill-tops cursing his luck. The valley, which at one time had sheltered over three hundred men, now held no more than a score, and a fossicker or so had already drifted in to grub about at the bottom of abandoned shafts. Stafford was empty; the shack crumbled; creepers twisted their way through the piles of old tin cans and finally buried them.

Yet Larry could not break away. He watched other men pack up and depart, some bound for Ballarat, some for Katoomba, and some for the cities of the coast; all of them had definite objectives, all of them except Larry. He was ashamed to ask for advice, and irritated, exasperated when by chance he met Calvin and saw in the older man's eyes a sudden gleam of amusement.

Though he had cut himself off from the life of the camp of his own free will he resented his isolation. At night he hated to listen to the sound of laughter and the echoes of songs that came to him from the group of survivors gathered about the camp fire. He became suspicious. Why had Calvin been so willing to let him shift for himself? It wasn't natural. Nor was it fair to bring a man out from the town and then set him adrift in the middle of the desert. Calvin was too impervious to misfortune.

"I'll wager he's made a strike," thought Larry, "and gave me the chuck a-purpose so's he could keep it all for himself. If I'm right I'll lay him out—cold."

And to add to his growing desperation a black boy woke him in the middle of the night and handed him a note from Denton. It read:

Why the — didn't you let me know Griskey and Pop Hagen left Stafford? Get on the job and stay there. What do you think I pay you for? To look pretty? Hagen is in Melbourne with a huge wad. We could have had it if you weren't so slow. Next time you miss a big one like that you are going to hear from yours truly. Tell me when Calvin pulls out. Another month ought to see the end of Stafford. When Calvin leaves come over here. I want to settle up. Give the boy the latest dope and give it him straight. Get me? D.

Larry's newly developed sense of independence overcame his cowardice. He wasn't going to be bossed by anybody—not even by Denton. Without a second's hesitation he scrawled on the back of the note:

Get somebody else to do your dirty work. I am through. Next boy you send here gets shot up. Here is wishing the same to you and many of them. Get me? L. M.

Having booted the bearer of the missive out of the shack, he felt much better and the next morning went down the valley to renew contact with his fellow-creatures.

The first man he met was one Sam Teller, who sat by the side of the creek with his pan on his knees.

"Hello, mournful," Teller called out. "Heard the big news? Calvin's struck luck!"

"How's that?"

"Chinaman's luck! My eye! Last evening he went nosing down that shaft Lew Hurley guv up two months back just afore he cleared out. And what d'you think Calvin scraped out: One — big nugget! The lucky fossicker! Just four inches in the clay right at the foot of the shaft. Makes a hard-working man like me fair tired. My eye!"

"He found it on Hurley's old claim?" choked Larry.

"For fair he did. I tell you some folks have all the——"

"And you believe him? You think Hurley'd miss a thing like that?"

"It's happened before," Teller declared philosophically, "and it'll happen again. What's worrying you?"

"It's a put-up job," mumbled Larry, "to cheat me."

"My eye! Go chase yourself back to the

nursery," snorted Teller. "You're a poor sort of cove. Clear out, I'm busy."

"Where's Calvin now?"

"Down there a ways with the boys. They found some beer Pop Hagen forgot and they're celebrating. But I signed a — pledge."

Larry hurried on. He came upon a group of men, all talking at once, and in the center, sitting with his back to a tree, Calvin was solemnly juggling three empty bottles.

"Here's little bright eyes," remarked Calvin. "Haven't seen you for a long time. You'll find some beer in the billycan Kitson's nursing just now. I can't look at you because I'd spoil this remarkable exhibition of skill. Help yourself."

But Larry did not want beer, he wanted justice. All the things he wanted to say suddenly burst from his white lips. Calvin, he declared vehemently, hadn't found no nugget down no disused shaft. He'd had it for months. He'd been hiding it until such time as he could rid himself of his hard-working, uncomplaining partner. He wanted all the profits for himself. He, Larry, had known all along that something was wrong, but he hadn't been able to place it. Now the thing was as clear as day. Calvin was a crook and a cheat and many other things besides. Everybody knew folks didn't leave nuggets lying around like that.

"I want my share, see?" gasped Larry. "You said anything you found belonged to the two of us."

"Only so long as we worked together," Calvin corrected him.

"Yes—I know—and you kept it quiet until you got rid of me. But you can't shake me off as easy as that. I tell you——"

Calvin went on juggling his three bottles.

"Larry," he declared, "you still have much to learn. Unfortunately for you both Kitson and Masters saw me go down and come up——"

"Of course they'd stand in with you," sneered Larry. "But that makes no difference. If you won't divvy up, you —, I'll——"

"You'll wake up dead," commented Kitson.

"Hold on, Kitson," ordered Calvin. "Larry's been slinging words about in a most reckless fashion, but his main argument is with me."

"Are you going to come across?" insisted

Larry, shaking with anger and oblivious to the fact that he was at the mercy of the score of men who surrounded him.

"No," said Calvin. "I am not coming across. You wanted to leave me—I let you go, and I owe you nothing."

"Very well," Larry snarled. "You wait. You're a — crook."

"I am not going to wait. We'll settle this at once," snapped Calvin. "You've spoiled my exhibition! You're a bad lot, Larry, mean and yellow as they make 'em. I'm going to give you one almighty lacing to teach you manners and then you quit. You'll leave Stafford at once."

"You can't tell me——"

Calvin jumped to his feet and rolled up his shirt sleeves.

"Get ready," he commanded, "and if I lose, which I don't expect, the boys'll let you go. That's right, isn't it?"

"Have it your own way," Kitson growled, drawing his watch from his pocket. "We'll see he moves on—if you lose."

Larry rushed in. He swung, missed and went down. Not a sound came from the onlookers. Calvin stepped back and waited for his opponent to arise. Larry rushed again; a blow on the cheek and another beneath the heart checked him. The blows seemed to steady him down. He felt no pain. The red mist which had veiled his eyes cleared away. He saw Calvin moving toward him, crouching a little. He shot out his left fist and felt it drive home full on Calvin's chin. The skin on his knuckles cracked open. Calvin stepped back, both arms upflung before his face, and Larry caught him twice just above the belt and dropped him to his knees.

"One!" Kitson called out. "Two—three—four——"

Calvin staggered to his feet and at once tore in, driving Larry back with a hurricane of blows. Larry tried to stand his ground, tried to stand his ground and fight back, but Calvin's right hand shot up, crashed into his jaw and sent him reeling into the ranks of the spectators.

"Time!" shouted Kitson.

When they faced each other a minute later Larry was surprized to see a thin trickle of blood running out of the corner of Calvin's mouth. Calvin was not having such an easy time of it as he had had in Melbourne! He was weakening; his arms moved more slowly; his feet lagged.

"It's the beer," he puffed in a clinch. "It's bad for the wind—beer is."

The end came suddenly. Calvin, aware that he could not hold out much longer, tried to force the pace, and bored in hunting for an opening for another uppercut. But he was not quick enough. Larry swayed out of reach of the blow and at the same instant lashed out with his left. Calvin went down all in a heap, rolled over on his back and lay still long after the count of ten.

"Some class!" said Kitson. "You can fight. It's the first time I've seen Calvin stretched out for keeps. Now clear out of Stafford as quick as you can."

"Don't I get my share?" panted Larry.

"You do not, and if you start another fight you'll get something besides punches." Kitson turned to the silent onlookers. "Say, a couple of you blokes, see he moves on, will you? I'm going to 'tend to Calvin. He won't want to see this bird when he wakes up—he might lose his temper."

So Larry was conducted back to his shack, helped to load his kit on a mule, his water-bag filled, and then he was led out of the valley to the edge of the desert.

"If you go that way," said one of his escorts, pointing toward the west, "and keep to the track you'll come to the Sunrise by tomorrow afternoon. If you go off the trail you'll croak. Better croak," he added as an afterthought.

Larry balked.

"I don't know the way," he pleaded with a hint of his old-time whine. "I'll get lost. It ain't right to turn me out like this."

"You're going," asserted the escort. "You're an unhealthy specimen to have loose in a mining camp. You can't get lost if you're careful. See the spur of the ridge over there to the right. Make straight for that. Then the track runs due west. Lor'! You can't miss it—it's marked with cairns every two miles or so, big ones six feet high. And you'd better camp on the high ground where you come to some bushes—you'll see the old fires—not too many snakes there."

"But, listen," begged Larry.

"Gwan! You can't go wrong if you keep your eyes open. You're not wanted here. Get out!"

And Larry trudged away from Stafford, going reluctantly toward the Sunrise Inn.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MULE DISPOSES

THE rapidity with which he was ejected from the valley slightly bewildered Larry, who, moreover, was still slightly dazed by the force of the blows Calvin had landed on his chin. It seemed unfair that he should be turned out after scoring such a sensational victory—and, after all, he had only called Calvin a crook. No harm in that, surely.

Still, you never could tell what was going to happen when you had dealings with those diggers. They were a bad lot. Not a bit sportsmanlike. No, not a bit. A brutal, filthy crowd. But he'd done them one in the eye, and they didn't know it—which was just as well. Wasn't his belt full of their money? This soothed him for a while until he remembered the provenance of the money and recalled with dismay the harsh message he had sent to Denton.

He stopped in his tracks and looked back irresolutely toward Stafford. He was astonished to see that he had barely covered half a mile. On the sky-line two horsemen were sharply outlined.

Denton—he didn't want to face that man. Denton used weapons more lethal than bare fists, and there was Long Butler to contend with, too. No, decidedly, the prospect of an explanation in the emptiness of the Sunrise Inn was most unpleasant. Larry wavered. In his heart he found a new warmth for the rough and ready diggers he had left behind. Nor was he anxious to go back to Melbourne and the squalor of Vine Street. The life outback had its compensations. Suppose he went back and told the diggers about Denton? Suppose he told Calvin he was sorry? Suppose he did turn over a new leaf and go straight?

Slowly he retraced his steps. One of the horsemen rode down to meet him, rode straight at him until they were no more than a hundred yards apart. Then Larry saw the man draw a revolver, raise it and fire. The bullet kicked up a spurt of dust at his feet, and the mule pricked up its ears in a most alarming fashion.

"Wait!" shouted Larry. "I want to tell you——"

The next bullet was a trifle high and a shade to the right. Larry heard it whistle by inches above his head. He ducked, and the mule, reasonably certain its master was

unwelcome, pivoted on its front legs and set off at a smart canter. Larry clung to the lead rope and cursed. He, too, understood at last that the decree was irrevocable and his original opinion of all diggers reasserted itself. He did not look back again.

The heat of the day became stifling. Larry crawled across the immense face of the desert, desperately anxious to miss none of the landmarks. This proved quite simple, and after a time, having overcome the first acute exhaustion brought on by the glare and the burning wind, he plodded along mechanically while he brooded over his troubles.

Denton ceased to terrify him. Before he reached the Inn he could find some suitable explanation. Denton wouldn't knock off a partner, he wouldn't dare.

But there was Calvin—Calvin with a great lump of gold—Calvin, the dingo, who wouldn't share his good fortune with the man who had toiled for him month after month—Calvin, who had ruthlessly kicked him out into the desert to die of thirst, if he lost his way.

It entered Larry's mind that it might be worth while to waylay Calvin—and relieve him of his treasure. The idea was distinctly pleasurable. Larry enlarged upon it. Why shouldn't he imitate Denton and keep all the profits for himself? Why not indeed? He owned a perfectly sound automatic. He had heard Calvin say that he would go by way of the Inn the next time he journeyed to Melbourne.

"I'd like to get even with him," Larry grumbled aloud, "just this once."

But what he really wanted was the gold. His fingers ached to touch it. Gold! A great lump of it, enough to keep him in luxury for the rest of his life. No more Vine Street slums, no more heat-stricken deserts—if he could lay hands on the gold.

He went on, head down, stumbling over rocks, pulling his way through the sand. The day waned; earth and sky were aflame with color; the wind died away and no sound broke the desert quiet.

Gold! It would mean comfort, a decent place to live in, good clothes, and anything else he might desire. But Calvin must be eliminated—shot in the back, that would be the surest way. Shot in the back. And then the gold. Afterward the Inn would have to be avoided.

He looked up, hunting with his eyes for the string of cairns. One seemed to loom out of the dusk a short distance ahead. He went forward, and the thing shrunk to nothing, became a stunted bush. The deepening shadows had blotted out the cairns; even the last one he had passed, seemingly only a few minutes before, had vanished. Tugging at the lead rope, he quickened his pace, going back over the ground he had just covered. The last faint strip of color drained out of the sky. Night closed in. Panic seized him. He ran, tripping over upended rocks, blundering into dry, thorny bushes until he dropped to his knees exhausted.

The lead rope, knotted about his wrist, bit into his flesh when the mule jerked its head. He clambered to his feet, breathing heavily. A wisp of a moon shed a silvery light across the desert, and far away Larry's straining eyes caught sight of some vague shape. He raced toward it and it melted away, became a shadow on the gleaming sand.

"I can't stay here," he said thickly. "I got to find it! — pile of stones a mile high. Ought to be able to see it on a night like this. It's light enough to read a newspaper."

On he went, going very slowly, peering about him, zigzagging each time some indistinct object took shape in the deceptive half-light.

Then all at once he was stumbling ankle-deep through stiff grass. The mule reared up, plunged and almost tore the lead-rope off Larry's wrist. He bit his lips to keep from crying out, for he knew that he was in the midst of the porcupine grass and knew, too, that he was hopelessly lost. He turned back swiftly, trying to get clear of the grass.

At each step the spikes pricked and tortured the mule, and at last the brute went mad. It halted, quivering, until Larry jerked at its collar, then it plunged, brayed in agony as its forefeet came down, and went racing away, bucking and swerving in its desperate efforts to get clear of the torment.

Unable to loosen the rope tied to his wrist, Larry was thrown off his feet and dragged. The spikes ripped open his clothes and his flesh. A flying hoof struck him in the chest. For a moment he was lifted off the ground and hurled through

the air. The rope snapped, and he fell heavily in among some rocks. In the distance the sound of the hoofs died away.

Minutes later Larry managed to force himself off the ground. Dazed, shaken, bleeding from twenty cuts, he went groping through the darkness, crying aloud for help. Thirst choked him into silence, and still he crawled on.

The shadows became alive with dim, taunting figures, which beckoned him this way and that: Ida, elfin-faced and mocking, tripped across the tops of the spikes and danced away her hands on her slender hips. Then out of the corner of his eye he saw Denton, but as soon as he turned his head Denton darted away, always just out of sight and creeping up behind. And there was Calvin watching him from behind boulders. And again Ida, her white arms gleaming in the moonlight, and a jumble of half-remembered faces, all of them whispering and chuckling:

"He's lost—he's lost! He can't get out! He'll die in the grass."

With outstretched arms, groping through this peopled darkness, Larry lurched on his aimless way. Shortly before dawn a shallow gully barred his way and into this he fell, striking his head against a stone, and lay still.

CHAPTER IX

LONG BUTLER'S JOB

WHEN the boy handed him Larry's message Denton stopped fanning himself for a few seconds and yawned. Stretching lazily back in his deck-chair, he scratched the top of his head where the hair was beginning to grow thin.

"Fetch Butler," he told the boy. "Fetch him quick."

Butler appeared, his hands in his pockets, a straw between his lips. He shambled in and perched on top of the counter.

"More work?" he inquired.

"One more job and we're through," Denton answered amiably. "Machin has kicked over the traces. You might take a run over to Stafford. Here, read this."

"Hm," commented Butler after having deciphered the scrawl. "Looks awkward for Machin."

"It does. Off you go—and while you're about it find out what Calvin's doing. If you meet him——"

"I know," Butler slid to the ground. "I think I'll meet him."

"Well, so-long," yawned Denton above the edge of his fan. "Take care of yourself."

Shortly afterward Butler left the Inn on an underfed cattle pony, which ambled along with drooping neck. Round-shouldered and ungainly, his head lost beneath a flopping straw hat, Butler looked like a sleepy plow-boy, except for the fact that plow-boys do not as a general rule carry Ross rifles with telescopic sights slung across their shoulders.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the trail, Mr. Ezra Calvin was setting out on his long journey to Melbourne. In the left-hand leather pouch strapped to his saddle reposed a lump of precious gold weighing in the neighborhood of seventy-two pounds, in the right-hand pouch nestled a .45 revolver. In the pocket of his coat rested yet another weapon of the same caliber. Calvin was taking no chances, yet he had not been able to resist the temptation of leaving the Karkaroo Desert by way of the Sunrise Inn.

The personality of Straight and Narrow Denton fascinated him. It fascinated him so much that he was ready to devote a part of his time to its complete extinction. He was ready for and anticipated trouble, but he expected no complications until he reached the three beefwood-trees—so that he failed to observe a little black speck, which momentarily appeared upon the horizon and quickly dropped out of sight.

The speck, which was Butler, was graced with good eyesight. Having hobbled his horse in a hollow between two sand dunes, he moved cautiously to the top of the slight rise, adjusted the sights of his rifle to two hundred and fifty yards, clamped the telescope in place, and waited.

When he saw that Providence had been so bountiful as to place Calvin at his mercy he cuddled the stock of his rifle against his cheek and took very careful aim. But at the exact moment when Calvin's head appeared at the bisection of the hair-lines in the telescope Providence saw fit to withdraw: A little sand, caught inside his left sleeve, worked its way to his elbow. He cursed violently, wriggled, shook his arm—and merely succeeded in making the pinch of sand trickle farther up his sleeve. Incautiously he tilted the muzzle of his rifle.

It winked in the sunlight, and the glint attracted Calvin's eye. He reined in sharply, stared for one second, and then set off at a gallop, reaching down at the same time for his revolver.

Cursing more fluently than ever, Butler readjusted his sights and fired. Calvin lurched, his saddle twisted beneath him and he dropped to the ground—and vanished, as if a trap-door had opened and swallowed him.

"He ain't dead," grunted Butler. "He's down in the ditch behind them bushes most likely. Get him later. I'm worse than a — soldier."

He waited until the riderless horse raced out of range of the spot where Calvin had disappeared and then brought it down with a bullet through the brain.

Still cursing himself for his poor marksmanship, he walked leisurely, with his rifle beneath his arm, toward the carcass. As he emerged from the shelter of the sand dune three shots rang out. They fell far short, though one of them, striking against a rock, went buzzing by like some giant bee.

Butler waved toward the bushes and laughed.

"He's worried," he commented aloud. "'Tain't like him to shoot wild. Wonder what's doing?"

Out of the saddle pouch he lugged the nugget. His eyes opened wider and wider, his jaw dropped and his hands trembled palsiedly. He sat down on the dead horse's flank and rocked with hysterical laughter, holding the lump of gold tightly to his chest.

"Who'd 'ave thought it possible?" he whispered, awe-struck. "Who'd ever thought it possible? By Cripes! And old Calvin's a-lying over yonder, tied to the ground."

He rubbed his chin between his forefinger and thumb and gazed over at the low bushes.

"Tied to the ground," he repeated. "And he might as well stay there. I don't want to get hurt—not now I got this. No, indeedy. He'll die soon enough as it is. I'll let him be."

Methodically he slit the water-bag, emptied the pouches and buried the saddle in the sand. Glancing sharply over his shoulder, he saw a figure move behind the bushes. He wheeled around, and as he did so another bullet kicked up the sand fifty feet away. It had been fired at a high angle and he

knew the kind of wound such bullets make, so he devoted several valuable minutes to accurate target-shooting and thereafter was troubled no more.

Later, as he rode away, he raised his battered straw hat and gravely saluted the clump of bushes.

"Sorry I missed you," he commented. "You're going to suffer, old top, but it's your own — fault. You've always been too suspicious-like."

After which valedictory address he jogged contentedly away, going not too fast, for the day was hot and he was, as he phrased it, "partial to his 'orse's welfare."

CHAPTER X

AT THE BOTTOM OF THE GULLY

SOME time elapsed before Calvin was aware of his immediate surroundings. By nature he was slow to anger, but his sudden dispossession and Butler's unfeigned contempt, stirred up within him a furious ungovernable passion, which made him act like a novice. Instead of lying perfectly quiet, for his left leg had been broken just above the knee, he fired when hopelessly outranged and only succeeded in giving away his position. And when Butler's cackling laugh came floating to him he was so enraged that he tried to creep across the intervening space, even though it afforded no cover, not even that of a large-sized stone.

Before he could roll back into the gully another bullet plowed a red furrow from his right wrist to his elbow and he lost control of his revolver, which slid from his hand and lay among the bushes.

He watched Butler's unhurried departure and gave vent to a most gruesome string of oaths; then he let himself slide down in a heap because he was weak from loss of blood.

And he found himself staring into the feverish eyes of Larry Machin, who sat propped up against the bank, licking cracked lips with a blackened tongue.

"Butler get you too?" asked Calvin, still busy with his own troubles. "He bagged my stuff, — him! And I guess we're both done for. My leg's bust. What's your complaint?"

"Water," croaked Larry.

"Bad as that, eh? Wait a minute until I plug this hole up."

A fiery pain pervaded his whole body and his face went ashen-gray as he clumsily bound up his wound and stretched the leg out straight. Twice he was obliged to lie motionless until his head cleared and the torment decreased, but he finally adjusted a tourniquet made out of a handkerchief and the stem of a pipe, and wiped the sweat from his eyes.

Then he drew a flask from his hip pocket. It contained his emergency ration; water and a little whisky, and this he gave to Larry, a thimble-full at a time, carefully measured out in the tin cap. They talked in snatches, disconnectedly, each dwelling mainly on his own predicament. Their quarrel was forgotten; it seemed to have occurred in some remote past, although Calvin's face still bore traces of the battle.

"Ain't you drinking any?" asked Larry after a while.

"Not yet. You see I'm just about done. Not much hope. Nobody's due out of Stafford for a week. The sun's going to finish me long before that."

"And you gave me first swig?" pondered Larry. "Why d'you do that?"

"Well, you've no bones broken and with luck you might get out, if you start right now and keep going."

Again they fell silent. Larry sat with his elbows on his knees, the palms of his hands pressed against his temples. For the first time it dawned upon him that he was very contemptible. Lack of food and the weak whisky may have had something to do with his strangely impersonal appreciation of his past record. It nauseated him. He was moved almost to tears at the sight of the blood-stained bandage on Calvin's leg.

"If I hadn't lost my way," he blurted out, "I was going to hold you up." He shook his head. "I don't deserve none of that—water. I don't deserve nothing, except a bullet."

Calvin shrugged his shoulders.

"That's all right," he said. "Forget all about it. Nothing matters much just now—except that you might as well be moving on."

"Suppose I carried you?" urged Larry.

"Oh, —, don't be a fool. You're weak as a kitten. If you can hold out you ought to reach Stafford in about two days. Tell the boys; they'll fetch me in."

"I'd best stay here. I couldn't go two days without water. What's the use of

moving? And I'm not leaving you. Say, Calvin, you're a white man and I wisht I could set things straight. You losing that gold makes me sick."

"Too late to bother about that now," sighed Calvin. "And, look here, Larry, you're not going to stay here. I won't have it. I'm too weak to argue, but you've got to go. The longer you wait the less hope there is for me."

"How long would it take to reach the Inn?"

"The Inn? You'd be there by tomorrow evening."

"Then that's where I'm going."

His mind had never been clearer, and he was filled with a tremendous courage he had never known before.

"Oh, bosh," began Calvin.

"Don't 'bosh' me," Larry retorted. "I'm going. One day—that's nothing. Maybe Denton and Butler have skipped. If so, I'll be right back with water and stuff. If they ain't skipped I'll be back just as quick, and what's more, I'll bring the gold."

Calvin laughed:

"It must be the whisky! Was it as strong as all that, Larry? Calm down."

"——! I am calm. I'm headed for the Inn this minute. It's no use talking; I'll get Butler if it takes a year."

"Have it your own way," wisely agreed Calvin. "But don't keep me waiting a year—I might desiccate. Now, don't rush off. Take my gun—it's somewhere on top there—and if you can locate the saddle you'll find some johnnycakes and a bit of beef in one of the pouches. As to the road——"

He gave Larry precise directions and wound up with:

"You're crazy as a loon, but I'd rather see you act like this than the way you did not so many months ago. Remember picking my pocket in the train?" He laughed. "You've changed a good deal."

"I think I have," Larry admitted soberly.

"And here's the flask," added Calvin. "I'll keep a drop in the cup. You'll need the rest. Now shut up and beat it. I'm tired."

"I don't need——"

"My good fool, get out!" groaned Calvin, closing his eyes.

And Larry started out on his journey toward the Sunrise Inn, renewed and refreshed, armed with a revolver which,

though heavy, contained but one bullet.

He stopped at dusk at the foot of a cairn, slept badly and went on again at sunrise. Mile followed mile. He willed his exhausted body to move across the empty land, and the effort so absorbed him that he quite forgot the purpose of his journey. The soles of his shoes cracked open; he threw them away and went on barefooted, indifferent to the burning heat of the sand.

At sunset he caught sight of the three beefwood-trees standing black against the blazing sky, and as darkness crept across the desert he saw a light spring into being at one of the windows of the Inn.

CHAPTER XI

DENTON GOES OUT OF BUSINESS

LARRY was without any set plan of action. One thing only was clear to him: He must recover the loot and take it back to Calvin. Before he was clearly aware of his surroundings he was skirting the paddock fence. Close at hand the house loomed against the stars and he crept along the wall to peer in at the lighted window.

Denton, as usual, sat in a deck-chair, fanning himself gently, and Butler moved restlessly about, his hands in his pockets.

"——and we'll go straight to Geelong," Denton was saying.

"I want to lie low for a bit," grumbled Butler. "That stuff's on my mind."

"Yes—you should have made a clean job of it. Can't make you out. I thought you were a steady file."

"I am at that, but I got feelings same as other people! When I saw that lump I couldn't stop——"

"And you forgot Machin. Oh, well, what's the use of rehashing the whole thing?" Denton yawned. "I'm going to bed."

"The stuff safe?"

"Course it is. In the locker by the bed. And, ——, there's only you and Charley left on the place. Who's going to rob us?" He stretched his arms above his head. "Ho! I'm glad it's all over. Playing the good inn-keeper's a slow game. I think I'll try Auckland for a change. Say, where's Charley? I want my nightcap."

"Charley," he called out. "Come on, you black ——, fetch me the whisky."

But Charley, the black boy, at that moment was creeping up behind Machin and crouching ready to spring. He had been sitting on the kitchen steps sucking at an empty pipe when his sharp eyes detected the figure moving quietly along by the side of the paddock fence. His orders were explicit: Any one found loitering near the house after nightfall was to be seized and brought before Denton. If the marauder resisted, Charley was to break his neck.

He was about to leap when Denton called him and, because he was a not very intelligent savage, he paused, wondering what he ought to do first—whether he should answer his master's summons or throw himself upon the eavesdropper. He may or may not have scuffed his feet, perhaps his shoulder rubbed against the wall. Larry swung around, and in a second they were locked together, rolling on the ground.

The black boy had the strength of an ape in his long arms. He tore through Larry's guard, caught him by the throat and swung him off the ground. He roared:

"Mist' Denton! Gotta man! Gott'im by t'roat!"

Larry's hand went to his pocket, closed upon the revolver, and he fired—point blank, full into the boy's stomach. Again they went down, but Charley's fighting days were over. He howled with pain, leaped to his feet, ran a few steps and collapsed. Larry crawled away on hands and knees until he reached the fence, where he flattened out behind one of the posts.

The lamp in the house had been extinguished. Over the roof top rose the moon, shedding a diffuse light, which heightened the blackness of the shadows. No sound broke the stillness. Larry felt his heart pound against his ribs, and his breath came in gasps. The dying man's screams had shattered his nerve, and in the ensuing silence his courage oozed away. He wanted to get up and run as fast as he could beyond Denton's reach, yet he dare not move, for he seemed to remember having heard a door slam. He felt sure that somewhere close at hand Butler was waiting patiently.

Moreover, the revolver had been knocked from his hand when he fell beneath the black boy, and he was defenceless. He wondered how Denton would feel if he had not eaten

for three days and had traveled forty miles on less than a pint of water? He was aware of every scratch and scar on his body where the porcupine grass had lacerated him. Exhausted, he lay motionless, peering through the screen of weeds at the base of the post.

Out of the sharp shadow cast by the house he saw something move and slowly take shape. The something was Butler, crawling along on his elbows an inch at a time. Larry shuddered at the sight of the white, evil face raised off the ground and turning slowly from left to right. Once clear of the shadow Butler stood up and ran stooping toward the fence. He passed within four feet of Larry and trotted along noiselessly, going toward the well.

A whistle came from the house. Denton stepped boldly out, erect and swaggering, an automatic dangling at the end of his arm. He prodded the body of the black boy in the ribs and grunted. Larry heard the grunt and pressed his mouth against the earth to keep from moaning aloud. He prayed to some terrible god, endowed for the occasion with the attributes of a St. Nicholas, to send him a weapon, any kind of a weapon, wherewith to confound his enemies. And he would have bartered several kingdoms for a horse.

Butler joined Denton. In the stillness their voices carried distinctly.

"Can't find a thing," Butler grunted.

"House is empty, too. It's a rum business," rejoined Denton, scratching the top of his head. "I don't like it one little bit. Whoever it is dropped his gun. Look—he fired only one shot and the — thing's full of spent cartridges."

"Place all closed up?"

"Yes."

"Well, I ain't been through the paddock yet; I'll try that."

"Wait—there's just one thing we might do first: You travel round to the right, I'll go left. I've a feeling somebody's hanging around by the rubbish pile. We'll squeeze him in. If that doesn't work, then try the paddock."

They separated. Larry saw Denton disappear around the corner. He scrambled to his knees, breathed a brief supplication and swiftly crossed to the house. It was, he had decided, the one thing to be done: If he could get in he might find some means of defense, whereas if he stayed where he

was he was sure to be caught like a rat in a trap.

He found the door locked, and his teeth chattered with fear, but the window answered to the pressure of his fingers and he crawled in. The place smelled musty and stale; it seemed to have grown enormous. He picked his way across the barroom to the rear of the house, going down the black corridor to the kitchen. Here the moonlight streamed in through the barred window and in a rack above a table he saw a row of knives.

He picked out a meat-chopper heavy and as well-balanced as an ax. He swung it, and the rush of the blade through the air restored his confidence a little.

"It'll have to do," he told himself. "It's better'n nothing."

Then he shot the bolts on the door and went back to the barroom.

Not a sound broke the stillness of the place. Larry became conscious of his choking thirst. He moved over to the counter and pulled off the rack the first bottle that met his hand. It contained a not too poisonous brand of Irish whisky, which was deceptively smooth and mellow to the palate. With one eye on the window Larry attempted to quench his thirst. Fortunately the bottle was barely a quarter full. He drained it dry.

Stealthily he went back to the door, where he waited for Denton to return. A change had come over him. He was not in the least drunk or even light-headed, but he had become extraordinarily brave. He would engage Denton in "mortal combat"—they were his own words—and crack his skull open. What he proposed doing to Butler was very similar.

He took a few practise swings with the chopper and was delighted at the ease with which he could wield it, almost to the manner born. Having begun to rotate his arm with great rapidity, he found it difficult to stop; the thing had, apparently, passed out of his control. He addressed himself to imaginary victims and slaughtered them as they came to him, most obligingly, one by one out of the shadows. This absorbed him so much that he failed to hear a key turn in the lock and the door creak open. Then Denton stepped in and Larry, his arm at the top of a swing, vainly tried to stop the downward blow.

"Look out!" he yelled. "Look——"

The chopper struck Denton beneath the ear and buried itself in his throat. He took two steps forward, said, "Hooo—ah!" and went down slowly as his knees gave way beneath him, falling at last across the threshold.

"Denton?" called Butler. "Denton, what's the matter?"

Frantically Larry tried to drag the heavy body out of the way so that he might close the door, but he gave this up in despair when he heard Butler running toward the house. He stopped long enough to pick up Denton's automatic and threw himself across the counter and out of sight. Brave though he had suddenly become, he was not inclined to face Butler at such short notice. His hands were shaking most alarmingly, and his eyes were revealing to him two doors blocked by two bodies, whereas he knew perfectly well there was but one of each. Moreover, he argued, as he had but one gun he could not compete with much hope of success against two Butlers both of equally deadly marksmanship.

"Denton!" Butler called out again. "Answer me! What's wrong?"

"Nothing's wrong," answered Larry, making his voice very deep. "Come on in."

Butler came closer to the house. In the doorway he saw Denton's boots and he drew back as if he had been stung.

"What—" he began. "Who— Say, Denton, come out here!"

"'S all right," boomed Larry. "I got him. Wait a minute, I'm coming."

Really, he was doing splendidly! Satisfied with his stratagem, he set his teeth in his lip and started on the long tramp from the counter to the door. It seemed to stretch out for countless miles. But he had a scheme and he chuckled to himself as he set his feet down heavily in imitation of Denton's heavy tread. He kept close to the wall and quickly thrust the muzzle of the automatic through the crack between the hinge and the support.

He saw Butler crouching uncertainly twenty feet away, Butler no longer placid and cool, but changed into a whimpering creature, afraid to turn and run, afraid to move from the spot where he stood. Larry brought the sights to bear. His trigger finger was as stiff as a board, his hand began to shake again.

"Wait," he tried to call out. "I'll——"

His voice had lost all its former assurance, and at the first word Butler threw his rifle to his shoulder and opened fire. The first bullet tore through the thin wall and crashed into the mirror behind the counter. While the glass was still tinkling to the floor the second shot struck the door obliquely and flung it back upon Larry, who was so incensed by this unexpected blow that he sprang back, and without quite knowing what he was doing, went tearing out of the house straight at Butler. The latter hesitated for a fraction of a second, and in that brief space of time Larry closed in upon him, caught the muzzle of the rifle in his left hand, dug his automatic into Butler's ribs and pulled the trigger twice. Butler dropped.

Larry found himself standing empty handed, staring stupidly at the body stretched at his feet. It happened so swiftly that it seemed unreal. It was difficult to believe that a man could die so easily and he half expected to see Butler rise to his feet.

When he understood that all danger was past he curled up on the ground and was sick, miserably, wretchedly sick, and he swore at himself because he was wasting time while Calvin lay out in the desert maimed and dying of thirst.

At dawn, however, he was ready. As he flung a saddle across the back of one of Denton's horses he was whistling a tune which he hated:

"I was born at Paramatta——"

His water-bags were filled, there was food in one of the saddle bags, and in the other lay Calvin's nugget.

In a shallow trench scratched in the sand by the pile of empty bottles Denton and Butler lay side by side, and as Larry cantered away a small fire he had kindled above the grave flickered and died out. Its ashes were all that was left of the three hundred pounds Larry had carried in his belt.

When he reached the gully by the sand dunes Calvin was still alive.

CHAPTER XII

THE OUT-TRAIL

ACROSS the lounge of Scott's Hotel, Melbourne, strolled two men, weather-beaten and sunburned. One of them, middle-aged and homely, limped slightly on his left leg. They were both dressed in very new clothes and very yellow shoes. They went out through the portals, open wide to the Summer breeze, and stopped at the top of the steps to light magnificent cigars resplendent with broad bands of gold.

The older man's homely face twisted into an expression meant to denote mirth.

"Larry," he exclaimed, "you're a lucky dog. I wish I were going your way!"

"I dunno about that," grumbled Larry. "You'll never have to go digging again. You —— capitalist."

"What is mine is yours," sighed Calvin. "I'd give my last cent to have your legs! No good weeping about it."

"I wish you'd let me grubstake you. If you need anything——"

"I don't need a thing," Larry retorted, blowing vast clouds of smoke into the air. "Well, so long, digger. Take care of that leg. Get some of them nurses to wheel you over to Ballarat in a bath-chair if I'm not here for Christmas."

They shook hands vigorously, and Larry turned upon the monumental hall porter.

"Where the —— is that taxi?" he demanded ferociously. "And my bags? Call this a hotel? Put some speed into it and stop looking pretty."

At last he was on his way, and Mr. Ezra Calvin threw away his expensive cigar and limped back into the hotel where he was living in regal style. But as he sank down into a well-padded armchair a passing waiter heard him growl:

"The lucky young pup—and I have to sit in this —— dump!"

"What can he want?" wondered the waiter. "*Madre mial* What can he want that he has not got?"





THE CAMPFIRE

*A Meeting Place
for
Readers - Writers
and Adventurers*



Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of heaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

HERE'S one written over a year ago and interesting in the light of events since then. These Near Eastern questions and the foreign relief question are large ones with more than one side, but it's sort of refreshing to hear a good word for the Turks if for no other reason than for centuries they have been a stock subject for abuse. And I notice that among the people who have had first-hand dealings with them and among the soldiers of most nations who fought against them in the Great War there is generally an honest respect and a friendly feeling for these same Turks as individuals.

S. S. West Gotomska, Smyrna, Turkey.

Another old number of the magazine turns up with the much discussed 'tops' schooner. I'm afraid our friend the Major hasn't been in Valletta, Malta, as if he had, he would have seen several of the afore-mentioned rigs. I could mention several other ports where I have seen this type of vessel.

IT SEEMS that I am always too late as I usually arrive on the scene of some great event *after* it's all over with. It seems that a large belt of Smyrna was completely destroyed in the disastrous fire of last September, being the width of the waterfront

section that was destroyed. Everything seems to be orderly here now, however. Rumor has it that Kemal ordered all Greeks to get out inside of four days or suffer their heads to be separated from the rest of their frame. Seems to me that they all did leave! In my opinion the Greeks were entirely to blame for their misfortune as they are reported to have started the fire. In Greece the popular saying is, "when Spring comes there is going to be a fight to the finish" with the Turks. And it seems to me that it will be the finish all right—finish of the Greeks!

In Athens the people seemed to be well clothed and far from hungry. In Salonica though, the condition was exactly reversed. I believe that most of the poor, miserable people are Turks and the most prosperous ones, the Greeks.

IF THEY will start their relief administering at home, then they will be doing something. If these people wish to try to take each others' rugs and shoe-shining stands, let 'em hop to it but at the same time forget that "America will always be on hand to feed them while they chew each others ears off."

These Balkans and Levantines are not happy, it seems, unless they are continually involved in some dispute.

So far as I can see, the Turks are about as hardy a people and a darned sight better in some ways than the Greeks. I don't blame them for wanting

to chase foreign parasites out of their country, people who would corner all the cash and send it to their own country.

Thought I was going to witness the burning of Constantinople several days ago when they had a big fire close to the waterfront. Luckily there was not much wind at the time. As it was, a number of large buildings were destroyed. Took several time exposures of that.—Radio Operator, JIM CALDWELL.

FROM the Camp-Fire cache come out some 1921 letters. Here's one about California Joe from an old-timer who knew him:

New York City.

I would like to say a word about the death of California Joe. In the Summer of 1876 I camped with Joe at Fort Laramie, Wyo. Having to leave Ft. Laramie for a week or so, when I returned they told me Joe had gone north. Later on I was carrying dispatches for the Cheyenne and Black Hills Telegraph Line. I met Joe again at Buffalo Gap with Gen. Brooks' expedition. Gen. Brooks was returning to Red Cloud Agency or to Fort Robinson which was close by. After the command got to Robinson Joe went into camp in a dugout close to the post.

One day a man that the Indians called "Red Dog" that Joe had an argument with some time before rode by and, seeing Joe sitting with his back in the door of the dugout, shot him through the back of his head with a carbine, then made his escape.

Joe was buried with military honors at Fort Robinson, Neb.—SETH HATHWAY.

SOMETHING about dog endurance and some of the famous races of the Northland:

Hemes, California.

It maybe of interest to some of our Camp-Fire friends to read of some of the wonderful tests of endurance to which some of the dogs of the Northland have been put. Jack Lamont, well known mail-carrier on the Yukon River below Fort Gibbons, once made a 75 mile continuous run with 7 dogs and 700 pounds of mail. He also at Ruby, with 4 dogs, won the dog race from Ruby to Long Creek and return, a distance of 60 miles, against such well-known dog racers and mushers as Walter Gohn known as the Going Kid and Alex Brown known as the Dago Kid Sappalla, one of Nome's noted dog racers, who won the Alaska Derby several times, and won the dog race from Ruby to Long Creek and return, 60 miles. This race is run over extremely rough hilly country—two long steep hills to climb both ways. The day after the race Sappalla started Nome-ward and to get there in time for the Nome races had to make long runs, his first being from Ruby to Mulato, 105, and he made around 100 miles until he got home.

BUT the greatest of all races took place in April of each year, starting from Nome, going by way of Solomon and thence, across one of the worst stretches of country possible, to Candle and return back to Nome—total distance about 414 miles. The conditions of the race compel the racer to haul any dog that is unable to walk or run. If by chance a dog gets hurt or goes lame, he can not leave it any

place but must take it along with him. All dogs at the finish must be under driver control either hitched or tied to sleigh or being carried in sleigh. Racers must have only the dogs they start race, no exchanging of dogs permitted.

The history of the Nome Kennel Club would make interesting reading. Blizzards and storms sometimes held the racers marooned in some road-house for days. Other times racers were lost out in the storm for days, and one racer got frozen to death. So one can see that only the best mushers and dog teams of the North competed. All time was taken until you returned. Record time 70 hours and some minutes. One racer had been allowed to oversleep owing to bets being against him, but he made the return run from Candle to Nome without stops, a distance of 207 miles. That, I think, is the longest dog-run known in Alaskan history and was run by a team of dogs from Siberia.

Yours, an old dog lover and musher.—KORYUK SCOTTY.

THE following should have appeared in the same issue with Edwin Hunt Hoover's story, "The Acid Test." It didn't. Blame me.

Denver.

Crookedness in the stock industry dates back to Genesis when Jacob "outsmarted" his father-in-law, Laban, and left the country with almost all of Laban's flocks of goats and sheep; and Laban's cattle almost to the last head! These two Old Timers ran their herds on shares—Jacob to have all the off-colored stock. But Laban took the precaution to remove from his herds all off-colored stock before turning the matter over to Jacob. Jacob, therefore, devised the scheme of setting "rods of green poplar—hazel—chestnut, and piled white strakes in them and made the white to appear which was in the rods—and the flocks conceived before the rods and brough forth cattle ringstraked, speckled and spotted." He placed these rods where the animals could not fail to see them—at the watering troughs. Remember? Laban made Jacob work seven years for Rachel—and then gave him Leah to wed. Jacob had to serve another seven years before Laban would surrender his daughter Rachel. The rustling of Laban's livestock was Jacob's little vengeance—and the Lord protected him in it when Laban pursued Jacob to force him to make restitution!

IN THOSE days, stock was not branded; owners knew them by the flesh marks—or claimed them on suspicion. No present-day device equals Jacob's system for accumulating the other fellow's cattle. But gentlemen developed talent in making brands "look like what they ain't" by means of a running-iron and acid. The latter method was used by Joe Light in "Acid Test" to obtain the ends of justice showing—for perhaps the billionth time—that an honest man can use a crook's methods to the latter's destruction. Any "worked-over" brand can probably be detected if the examination be made by experts who are painstaking and who take enough time in their investigation. The time element in "Acid Test" would have shown the "ancient-looking" "MV—connected" brands to have been acid burned and recent—because, within six months' time not one of them would probably have been

visible! The method employed by *Light* and his companion to "prove" the innocence of *Bern* and *Wyman* which they already knew—was to part the long, Winter coat of hair on the cattle and etch, with weak solution of nitric acid, the brand of *Mariano Valdez*. It would take perhaps two weeks for the hide to blister, peel and heal, leaving a mark that looked many years old. It would appear so to even the critical or expert eye if artistically done—and, no doubt, *Joe Light* did the job painstakingly. But if the jurymen had used magnifying-glasses and observed the hair growth and the slight inflammations that probably appeared on some of the "MV" brands, their suspicions might have been aroused. In extenuation for this apparent lack of observance on their part it may be stated that the jury was composed of men who knew *Bern* and *Wyman* to be intelligent as well as honest stockmen. They suspected a "nigger in the woodpile" and were pretty well satisfied that the partners were victims of a "frame." Consequently they were glad to see such powerful evidence for the defense; and viewed it with real pleasure.

I HAVE never talked to any stockman of the old regime who has acknowledged that he, personally used the acid bottle and brush; but they all know the intimate secrets of its use and abuse. Some claim that an acid brand, in order to have the durability of an iron brand, must be applied in such strength as to burn completely through the hide—and this can be detected by skinning the animal and examining the brand from the inside. If the acid has been used to work over a prior brand, this inside information will tell the tale—at least it has been done on a number of occasions.

At best its use is highly precarious—the one big merit being that it peels and heals quickly and looks old within a short time. To obtain this result only a weak solution can be applied and the brand, therefore, is only temporary; so the man who uses it must either re-work the brand often or sell to a butcher.—EDWIN H. HOOVER.

UNDER a January 11th newspaper heading of "Detroit German Gives \$1,000,000 to Belgians as Endowment for University in Brussels" it is stated that Raphael Herman, a Detroit manufacturer, has given that sum to the International University that has its headquarters at Brussels. Born in Germany in 1865, he went to Buffalo in 1893. It is not specifically stated that he became an American citizen.

On the face of it, it looks like the kind of thing that can really end war. The peoples themselves do not want wars. Wars are made for them by the diplomats and capitalists, ably supported by the economists. If war is to be abolished, it will be done by the people themselves, not by those others. Every time the people, even in a single individual case, assert their will for peace and give it actual being by a concrete act they come one step nearer to world peace.

However silly it may sound to the un-

thinking, there is in the last analysis only one single remedy for war, and that one single remedy is the Golden Rule.

HE'S stringing us, is E. E. Harriman of A.A. and our writers' brigade. Personally, I refuse to bite. I'd rather hunt for the Blue Bucket. It's found oftener.

Firstly—why do folks persist in calling an un-worked deposit of gold a mine? It is not a mine until worked. Labor makes it a mine.

Now, after reading W. H. Herren's article, published in the *Morning Oregonian* of March 7, 1922, I am moved to offer the account of the same "mine" published in the *Spokane Review* of June 16, 1907.

IN 1847 (Meek guided his party in 1845) Jim Curtis led 27 people from Iowa. They reached Boise in September—party split—many went due west and were never heard from—Curtis led his folks past old Fort Harney, now Burns, past what is supposed to be Maury Mts. and on "toward the highest of the beautiful, snow-clad mountains," which probably means Mt. Hood.

Reaching the foothills of the Cascades, they were in bad shape for lack of water—all in weakened condition—at last resort set the cattle free—found cattle in cañon, knee-deep in water. Geneva, 18-year old daughter of Big Jim Curtis, with her sister of 14, herded cattle in cañon—carried blue painted tin bucket (probably full of food for a lunch), followed cattle, found pretty yellow stones, filled bucket and hung it on limb of a tree; kept two lumps; lumps proved to be gold and sold for \$85. Rescue party found folks—everything left save grub and what stuff could be packed on backs."

HOW strange that the two daughters of Jim Curtis should find in 1847 just such a deposit of gold and should have with them a blue tin bucket to fill with nuggets, when W. J. Herren and sister found it while carrying blue wooden buckets! Coincidences multiply.

The *Blueness of the Buckets* just has to be in evidence, be they tin or wood or canvas. It matters not whether the Blue Bucket Mine is credited to Idaho, Wyoming, Oregon or California, as long as the indigo or ultramarine color of the bucket is sufficiently emphasized.

Now it happens that Herren locates the Blue Bucket gold as found somewhere in the mountains near the Malheur. According to Geneva Curtis, it was found in the eastern foothill country of the Cascades. Another party located it near Donner Lake, California, about three years ago. One declared it was above Grant's Pass, Oregon, west of Cascades. Another swore it was up in Idaho.

You pays your money and takes your choice, boys, but I can give you several better yarns. Modern stuff and authentic. Who wants to know?

One hundred pounds of gold nuggets, buried at the foot of a tree!

A placer pocket from which a man panned \$1,000 in an hour and then had to go out after grub and could never find the place again, though he actually got his thousand in cash for that hour of panning. Whoopee!

Who Wants To Know?—BIG JIM HARRIMAN.

IT'S quite a while since the Concordia, Kansas, *Blade-Empire*, whose city editor, Charles R. Cook, is a Camp-Fire comrade, published the following editorial, but that editorial is no less true—and needed—than it was then. After quoting some Chicago *Tribune* arguments favoring anti-weapon legislation and citing the fact that Prohibition does not stop the manufacture, importation and use of liquor, it says:

And now for the one and only argument that can possibly be mustered for an absolute prohibition of the manufacture of firearms and an absolute ban on their possession by private citizens.

THE *Tribune*, with all the other cranks on this subject says such a procedure will disarm the crooks. We wish to waggle a finger in the direction of New York and its Sullivan law which absolutely prohibits possession of pistols and revolvers, and imposes a stiff pen sentence on those found guilty of infractions of this law. How many crooks in New York City has the Sullivan law disarmed? How many crimes, murder included, has it prevented? Yet there the law is, for all to see. Private citizens, honest men and women, abide by it and walk the streets unarmed. Yet they are held up, robbed, slugged, murdered, assaulted—made the victims of any thug and highwayman at large, and there are several thousand of them in that metropolis, and they have no protection because the law has disarmed them, not only on the streets of Gotham but in their homes as well.

IS THE *Tribune* so innocently childish that it really believes such a prohibition would disarm the criminals or banish crime and make a heaven of the United States? Does the *Tribune* think the crooks wouldn't get guns? Does it believe that the crooks would give up the guns they already have? Does it believe that guns and ammunition wouldn't be smuggled into this country by the carload and steamboat load? Does it believe that, were the crook disarmed he wouldn't make murderous use of a dirk, brass knucks, slungshots, daggers, bowie-knives, butcher knives, hammers, hatchets, axes, meat axes, iron bars, clubs, poisons and soon evolve a cute little method of murder by the use of small amounts of lethal gases such as used in the last war and supplied by unscrupulous chemists at home or smuggled in, like hooch is today? Above all, does the Chicago *Tribune* favor violation of the constitution of the United States which gives to every man the "right to bear arms?"

WE'LL declare for the absolute prohibition of the "man killer," as the *Tribune* so charmingly calls it, only when the program also calls for an absolute ban on the manufacture of poisons; of all sharp-edged tools; of all iron and steel and brass that can be utilized as a weapon (this includes all household cutlery and farm machinery, etc.); that prohibits the growing of trees on grounds that the wood might furnish clubs to potential murderers; that abolishes the making of dynamite and other explosives used in industry but that might be used as in the last railroad strike, to blow up homes and murder individuals; that prohibits the manufacture of jack

knives because men have been killed with them; that stops the use of matches, because mobs down south occasionally burn negroes, and that finally stops the bringing into the world of human offspring on the premise that they may sometime in the future take the life of some of their fellowmen.

SOMETHING from Frank Robertson in connection with his story in this issue.

Salt Lake City, Utah

If you use this story some wise bird like Brother Frank Earnest may rear up and say that the idea of trailing around a desert with a wagon is the bunk. The accepted idea of desert travel is by burro. But the fact is that the northern Nevada desert is unique in this respect and hundreds of herds of sheep winter there every year and each herd has its wagon. They go everywhere. It is the exaggerated boast of many camp-movers that they can take a sheep-camp where a cow-puncher can't drag a rope. They do do things that are amazing.

I remember once when I was moving camp the herder wanted his wagon set on the top of a pinnacle and the only way to it was around a side-hill where an ordinary wagon would tip over of its own weight. A sheep camp is much worse. But we got it there. We tied a long rope to the lower side of the camp, threw it over the top and the herder took his dallies with the other end around the saddle-horn. I crawled in the camp and we began to move. We made it. But if either of the wheels on the upper side had hit a rock or a bush, or the saddle-horse above had slipped ever so slightly we'd have taken an awful roll. By a strange irony of fate a hard wind came up that night and blew the camp off with the herder in it. There was nothing but kindling wood of the camp, but the herder stayed with his bed and wasn't hurt.—FRANK ROBERTSON.

SINCE it refers to one printed a year and a half ago, I think you'll pass over my breaking our general rule against praise of our own stories at Camp-Fire. "A Fool and His Fiddle," by John Joseph, as you may remember, featured the effect of music by a real violinist upon a Western dance-hall. Alex McLaren testifies to the effect as thus presented.

Hollywood, California.

Years ago when I was a derelict kid around the mining camps of New Mexico and Arizona, the communities, and mining companies were not characterized by the same spirit of uplift they show today. There were no Y. M. C. A's., no reading-rooms, no place to go after a shift's work but the dance-halls—unless one wanted to brood in the gloom of a smelly bunkhouse, and in those days very few took the latter course.

That story took me in its grasp and carried me back to those old days. Now if there had been one flaw in the story, it would have broken the dream. But there wasn't. It was true to the life of those days and places, in every detail.

I could see myself as a long hungry kid, squatted, as I often would, on the edge of the piano-stand and watching "the soiled doves" as they tripped the

floor in the arms of husky miners and bowlegged punchers.

THEN came the night when, on entering my usual haunt, I saw a strange face on the platform. He was a queer looking bird—from a mining-camp point of view. But say, man, how he could tease a fiddle! Then when he started a thing some one said was a rhapsody—I can't describe it. That fiddler wasn't in Arizona a-t a-l-l. No, sir, he was miles away and the noise that was percolatin' out of that old gourd was like a folk-song echo from the plains of old Hungary.

The rattle of chips and roulette ball stopped. Nary a clink of glass came from the bar. Every man, woman—and one kid that I know of—held his breath. I saw big huskies reach for their nose-rags, and some of the dames fooling suspiciously with fingers around their eyes. And I'll swear that this kid I been alluding to felt something about the size of a hen-egg workin' up in his gullet. It was something we had never heard before—but we recognized its power. Music is a universal language.—ALEX McLAREN.

A SPIRITED defense of Major Reno for his course during the Custer fight:

Los Angeles.

I was greatly pleased at the letter which appeared in the issue of Dec. 30th relative to "survivors" of the Custer fight, and other matters pertaining to that disastrous affair. No name was signed to the letter, but I take it that it was from —, than whom there is no better living authority on the Custer fight, aside from the three living generals who took part in it (then lieutenants). He has made the Custer battle a close study for more than 25 years.

You will doubtless recall that I took issue over the publication in *Adventure* of the claims of Mr. — who stated that his brother was a surgeon in the 7th Cavalry and was killed beside Custer; also that "Autie" (Arthur) Reed, Custer's 19 year old nephew, was a second lieutenant of the 7th, and had come from West Point to take part in the campaign.

I NOTE in Reno's report, in a footnote,—are the names of Lieuts. Sturgis and Porter, whose bodies were never found. To this should have been added the name of Lieut. Harrington, whose body was likewise never found.

The name of W. M. Camp is given as authority on Indian battles. Gen. Godfrey, Gen. King and Gen. Anson Mills have all told me personally that there is no man living in this country who is as well posted on the Indian wars on the Plains as Mr. Camp. I know him very well. We stayed together in Milwaukee at a hotel there in 1917 when we were visiting Gen. King and discussing the Campaign of 1876. Mr. Camp told me that he spends his vacations every Summer in visiting either the Indian reservations or some of the battlefields, and that he has talked with every Sioux Indian now alive who took part in the Custer fight.

HE IS to be congratulated for thus giving his time to run down and save for future history these important affairs relative to our Indian wars. Mr. Camp told me, however, that he had made no study of the Apache wars in Arizona and New

Mexico. I do not believe there are many enlisted men of the 7th Cavalry with whom Mr. Camp has not talked and had interviews.

I myself have made it a point to do that with every man in the California Soldiers Home near Los Angeles, among whom is John Burkman, for many years Custer's own "striker," and who saddled his horse "Vic" on that fatal 25th of June, but took the general's other mount, "Dandy," and remained back with the pack train at the general's order. Burkman can give every word of his last interview with Custer just a few moments before he left to ride down the east bank of the little Big Horn to find a crossing where he could attack the lower end of the Sioux camp. I have talked with this old man for hours, while the tears would stream down his face as he recalled the scene where he bade his general goodby and goodluck. Burkman is 84 years of age, yet his mind is just as clear on the events of that day as if it all happened yesterday.

I ALSO note that it states no photograph was ever made of the Custer monument which shows the names of those killed. I made a photo of the front end of the monument, showing the names, of all the officers, but it was a poor day for photos and I did not photograph the other three sides on which the names of the enlisted men appear. I can—and would be glad—to furnish you with a copy of this photo, which shows every name perfectly distinct. I took this in 1913 when I went over the battlefield with old "Curley," Custer's Crow Indian scout, who died May 22d this year. (1923.)

Among dozens of clippings I have made are a great many claims of men who assert that they were "survivors" or else "witnesses" of the Custer fight. Among these is one by a man who asserted that he "was freighting goods up the Little Big Horn River" and saw a big fight going on across the river on the bluffs; that he hid his team in the brush, pulled out his field-glasses and saw the whole fight. As there was no wagon road up the Little Big Horn in those days, nor any settlement of any sort to freight goods to—short of Helena or Bozeman, I wonder where he was bound for? These claims are all "bunk." As your correspondent states, there were no *survivors* of the Custer fight, nor were there any *witnesses* except the Indians who took part in it.

ANOTHER thing I have wondered—and that is, if the public in general knows that what is commonly known as the battle of the Little Big Horn consisted of three separate and distinct battles. First: Reno's fight in the river bottom; second, Custer's fight four miles down stream; third, Reno's fight on the bluffs—That while Reno was making his retreat across the river and up on the bluffs, many of these Indians left and went to attack Custer, which gave Reno a little breathing spell to collect his forces; for Benteen and McDougal, with the pack train, to join him—and that then his force moved down-stream about one mile to see what had become of Custer, but by that time the Custer force was wiped out and the Indians all united again and hurled themselves against Reno, who retreated back to his original position on the hill, where he fought the balance of the 25th and until sundown of the 26th, when the Indians withdrew and left, with their entire village, toward the Big Horn Mountains.

WHEN the public condemns Reno they make a mistake. They ask why he did not carry out Custer's orders and "charge through the village." Ye gods! Reno had—according to his own testimony in 1879 at the Reno Court of Inquiry, (a copy of which I possess), 112 men. There were—according to the testimony of officers who were at this Inquiry—anywhere from 2,500 to 5,000 fighting warriors—one officer stated *nine thousand!* Yet Reno was expected to charge through this village—which extended up and down the stream for four miles, and was from half a mile to a mile wide—while Custer attacked the lower end. Had Reno attempted this, how far, think you, would he have gone? Maybe a quarter of a mile—*probably not 500 yards* after striking the first line of tepees.

I say "while Custer attacked the lower end." *Nobody knows what Custer was going to do or was trying to do.* He told Reno to "attack and I will support you," or that "we" will support you. Did Custer do this? He did nothing of the sort. Why not? Nobody knows why. It is *supposed* that he intended to do this, and was searching for a ford, but the high banks on his side of the stream prohibited his locating a crossing until he was almost four miles down the river. Here he was attacked and completely wiped out within—so many writers and historians contend—from twenty minutes to half an hour—some say one hour at the very most.

WHAT about Reno all this time? He attacked as directed by the commanding officer, Gen. Custer. He supposed Custer was yet in his rear and was coming up, as he had said he would do, to support him. He fought coolly and well until he saw that he was being entirely surrounded—that Indians were in his rear and also on the opposite bank of the stream. Another thing the public has overlooked, and that is the *immense clouds of dust* which hung over that whole field, making it impossible to see a hundred yards in any direction, and Reno's handful could not tell how many they were fighting against. At last he ordered a charge to cross the river, if possible, and get on high ground. He did this to save his command, for all witnesses who were with him in the battle state that had they remained twenty minutes longer in the timber, not a man would have got away alive; that the move was made—so Reno himself testifies—to give what was left of his command a chance for their lives.

I doubt if you can find a single enlisted man, who was in the Reno end of the fight, to condemn Major Reno. I can send you the personal story of Wm. E. Morris who was there; I can send you the personal story of Trooper Wm. C. Slaper who was there; I can send you the entire proceedings of the Reno Court of Inquiry giving the testimony of various officers, and you won't find a single one who testifies against Reno in his actions in the river-bottom end of the Little Big Horn fight.

In this testimony much mention is made of the *great clouds of dust* which hung over the plain, made by the Indian ponies as their riders charged about—acting just as a smoke screen of our world-war battles—and doubtless this dust was raised for the purpose of concealing their own movements as well as to preclude the possibility of their opponents telling how much of an enemy they had to face. Read all this testimony and the stories of those *who were there*—not the opinions of those who never studied this fight, and if you do not come out in

favor of Major Reno it will be because you don't want to acknowledge that he did the best thing possible under the circumstances.

HAD Custer remained and supported Reno, as he said he would do, things might have turned out differently, but as for me, I do not believe Custer and his whole force could have whipped those Indians. For one thing, note how differently they were armed. The 7th Cavalry had those old single-loading Springfield carbines, defective as to extraction of the empty shell; not accurate over 200 or 300 yards, while the Indians were vastly better armed, many with Spencer, Henry and Winchester repeaters. In Reno's retreat, it is the testimony of many that the Indians "just rode alongside the troops pumping bullets into them from repeating rifles." A trooper could fire the one shot in his carbine and it was useless except as a club. He must then depend on his revolver; six shots and there was no time nor opportunity to reload. That retreat across the river was a confused mass of madly-scrambling cavalymen, in a stream belly-deep to the horses. In many instances the Indians just pulled the men from their mounts and killed them at their leisure. Reno lost 29 men going up the bluffs on the other side, not including those killed as they rode out of the timber and charged toward the ford—also many wounded whom he could not possibly assist and who fell into the hands of the Indians.

I DIDN'T intend to ramble on at this length at the start, but when I read anything that charges Reno with cowardice in this river-bottom fight, it "get's under my collar." Custer could have done no better—in fact, with his usual recklessness and confidence or over-confidence, doubtless he would have charged straight down the village and been wiped out anyway. I consider that Reno used good judgment in stopping when he did, standing them off as long as possible, and then, with no hope of support from Custer, in charging for high ground where he would have a better chance than in a timbered river-bottom full of underbrush where Indians could creep up on his command and pick them off to a man.—E. A. BRINSTOOL.

If Major Reno HAD played the coward, does any intelligent reader believe for one moment that the remnant of the 7th Cavalry would have signed and sent to Washington the following petition? You can't make me believe it!

Camp near Big Horn on Yellowstone River,
July 4th, 1876.

To His Excellency
The President, and the
Honorable Representatives
of the United States.

Gentlemen:

We, the enlisted men, the survivors of the battle on the heights of the Little Big Horn River, on the 25th and 26th of June, 1876, of the Seventh Regiment of Cavalry, who subscribe our names to this petition, most earnestly solicit the President and Representatives of our country that the vacancies among the commissioned officers of our regiment, made by the slaughter of our brave, heroic, now lamented Lieut.-Col. Geo. A. Custer, and the other

notable dead commissioned officers of our regiment, who fell close by him on that bloody field, daring the savage demons to the last, be filled by the officers of the regiment only. That Major M. A. Reno be our lieutenant-colonel, vice Custer, killed; Capt. F. W. Benteen our Major, vice Reno promoted. The other vacancies to be filled by officers of the regiment by seniority. Your petitioners know this is contrary to the established rule of promotion, but prayerfully solicit a deviation from the usual rule in this case, as it will be conferring a bravely fought-for and a justly merited promotion on officers, who, by their bravery, coolness and decision on the 25th and 26th of June, 1876, saved the lives of every man now living of the Seventh Cavalry who participated in the battle, one of the most bloody on record, and one that would have ended with the loss of life of every officer and enlisted man on the field, only for the position taken by MAJOR RENO, which we held with bitter tenacity against fearful odds, to the last.

To support this assertion—had our position been taken 100 yards back from the brink of the heights overlooking the river, we would have been entirely cut off from water; and from behind those heights the Indians would have swarmed in hundreds, picking off our men by detail, and before mid-day June 26th, not an officer or enlisted man of our regiment would have been left to tell the tale of our dreadful fate, as we would have been completely surrounded.

With the prayerful hope that our petition be granted, we have the honor to forward it through our Commanding Officer.

Yours respectfully,

Then follows the names of 235 enlisted men. I can furnish the name of every man if this is doubted.

This petition was sent to Gen. Sherman, who did not present it to the President or to Congress for reasons mentioned in Gen. Sherman's endorsement. Here is Sherman's reply to the petition:

"Headquarters Army of the United States

Washington, D. C. August 5th, 1876.

"The judicious and skillful conduct of Major Reno and Capt. Benteen is appreciated, but the promotions caused by Gen. Custer's death have been made by the President and confirmed by the Senate; therefore this petition can not be granted. When the Sioux campaign is over I shall be most happy to recognize the valuable services of both officers and men by granting favors or recommending actual promotion.

"Promotion on the field of battle was Napoleon's favorite method of stimulating his officers and soldiers to deeds of heroism, but it is impossible in our service, because commissions can only be granted by the President, on the advice and consent of the Senate, and except in original vacancies, promotion in a regiment is generally, if not always, made on the rule of seniority.

"W. T. SHERMAN
General."

If the foregoing doesn't change the opinions of a lot of these anti-Reno knockers, then they are too bull-headed to bother with. "Facts are stubborn things," and here are the facts! Let the knockers get their hammers out and turn loose!—E. A. BRINNSROOL, 1428 Norton Ave., Los Angeles, Cal.

Another query:

Why call it the "Custer Massacre"—when, in reality, it was NOT a massacre? The dictionary defines "massacre" as "the atrocious killing of a number of persons." Custer made the attack himself, and fought until wiped out. I call that a *battle*. A "massacre," according to my notion, is the butchery of a lot of people taken unawares or not capable of resistance—such as the Mountain Meadows Massacre, where Mormons, assisted by Indians, induced some 165 immigrants—whom they had attacked—to come out and put themselves under the protection of Mormon soldiers or Mormon settlers. They did so, and after being marched a short distance—at a given signal they were all killed but some dozen small children all under seven years of age. They had first been persuaded to pile their guns in one wagon "so as not to arouse the enmity of the Indians." Custer and his men simply fought against overwhelming odds, and were killed in a regular battle—not caught in an ambush unawares. This Custer affair should always be spoken of as "the battle of the Little Big Horn," anyway, for that is what it was—a battle—or rather, three separate battles commencing shortly after 2 P.M. June 25, 1876, and continuing until about sundown of June 26th.

WHEN you speculate as to what is going to happen to this country, as time goes on, consider the following:

In the hands of about 657,646 teachers in our elementary and secondary schools rests the education of our children for their first twelve years of schooling. We ought to know something about them, for these men and women are the people who do the mental—and, to a degree, the physical and moral—shaping of our own children during their most formative years, who in most cases give our children the only regular education they ever get. Considered more broadly, these teachers are the men and women who are *shaping the next generations of Americans*. America's future depends upon the way these future generations are shaped.

When you come to think about it, the work of these teachers is about as important as the work of any other class of people among us. Much more so if you remember that plumber and banker, farmer and statesman, all get their fundamental training and shaping from these teachers to whom are entrusted America's children through so much of their waking time.

NATURALLY, any one can see it's only common sense to make sure that these shapers of America are the kind of people we can afford to entrust with the shaping of our children and of the country we and

our children shall have to live in. Particularly as we're so fond of boasting about our grand system of free education, what the "little red school-house" has done for this country, and all that. Also, it's only plain business sense to make sure, after investing some billions of dollars in school buildings and other physical necessities of education, that we don't put those billions of dollars into the hands of people not competent to bring us fair returns on our investment. Not to mention paying them an additional several hundred million dollars every year for their possible incompetency.

WELL, in 1913 the average salary we paid those teachers was \$515 per year.

A bit less than \$43 a month for a twelve-month year (teachers have to live twelve months every year, you know).

A bit over \$0.90 per week.

Noble, wasn't it? Good business, wasn't it?

Makes you prouder than ever of our splendid educational system.

Better salaries now? Well, the average salary for those teachers in 1922 (no later figures yet available) was, I'm happy to say, nearly double that—\$1017. Only, I regret to say, the *purchasing power* of that average salary was only 94% of what it was in 1913.

\$84.75 per month.

A bit less than \$19.56 per week.

IF SOME bright-eyes says "But look at their three months' vacation," well, let him try teaching school a few years and see whether he doesn't need every bit of those three months to keep him in right shape to go through the next nine months.

Contrast what we pay our teachers—these molders of our children, these shapers of America—with what we pay a mason, a carpenter, an unskilled day-laborer, a housemaid, a scrub-woman, a street-cleaner, a garbage collector. In particular, contrast it with what we pay a school janitor.

And then go off somewhere and hide your head in shame, for you are one of those who permit this folly and injustice. The next time you hear some one boasting about our wonderful system of free schools, well, maybe you won't join in the boasting. Especially if you have even the rudiments of good business sense in you.

What kind of teachers do you expect to

get for \$19.56 a week? Why, it will soon be that any one with brains enough to teach school will have too much brains to waste his or her time at such underpaid work when on all sides there are plenty of jobs that pay far better, don't require any brains or training to speak of, and don't require even much physical exertion.

\$19.56 a week! And, before they can begin getting it, they have to spend years in getting educated and trained for it!

Some get much more, of course. Yes, but, God save us, think how many have to get how much less to bring the average down that low!

IF I were a member of an average board of education, or were any official or politician in any way responsible for paying a "salary" like that to the shapers of America's future, I'd be ashamed to appear on the street. It's shame enough to be one of the idiot voters who permit this vicious injustice, this narrow-minded mistake from a practical business point of view, this raw lack of elementary patriotism, this unutterable, driveling stupidity.

Would cost us so much? It costs us a whole lot more not to. And we could increase those "salaries" over and over and over again by the simple expedient of going without candy and chewing-gum. Oh, we can afford it. And we can't afford not to.

The next time you meet a teacher, blush, and sneak away. Every one we meet is a walking advertisement of the fact that we are rotten business men, neglectful or vicious voters, and plain unadulterated, unadorned fools.—A. S. H.

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QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

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2. The Sea Part 2 British Waters

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L. F. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, via Sydney, Australia. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions. Questions regarding the measures or policy of the Government or proceedings of Government officers not answered. (Postage ten cents.)

11. Philippine Islands

BUCK CONNOR, L. B. 4, Quartzsite, Ariz. History, inhabitants, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, commerce.

12. Hawaiian Islands and China

F. J. HALTON, 1402 Lytton Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

★ (Enclose addressed envelop with ten cents in stamps NOT attached)

- 13. Japan**
GRACE P. T. KENNEDY, *Osaka, Me. Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.*
- 14. Asia Part 1 Arabia, Persia, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Borneo**
CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, care *Adventure*. Hunting, exploring, traveling, customs.
- 15. Asia Part 2 Siam, Andamans, Malay Straits, Straits Settlements, Shan States and Yunnan**
GORDON MACCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York. Hunting, trading, traveling, customs.
- 16. Asia Part 3 Coast of Northeastern Siberia, and Adjoining Waters**
CAPT. C. L. OLIVER, P. O. Box 2882, Tampa, Fla. Natives, language, mining, trading, customs, climate. Arctic Ocean: Winds, currents, depths, ice conditions, walrus-hunting.
- 17. Asia Part 4 North China, Mongolia and Chinese Turkestan**
GEORGE W. TWOMEY, M. D., 41 Rue de France, Tientsin, China. Natives, languages, trading, customs, climate and hunting.
- 18. Africa Part 1 Sierra Leone to Old Calabar, West Africa, Southern and Northern Nigeria**
ROBERT SIMPSON, care *Adventure*. Labor, trade, expenses, outfitting, living conditions, tribal customs, transportation.
- 19. ✦ Africa Part 2 Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East, Uganda and the Upper Congo (Editor to be appointed.)** Geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, adventure and sport.
- 20. Africa Part 3 Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal and Zululand**
CAPTAIN F. J. FRANKLIN, care Adventurers' Club of Chicago, 40 South Clark St., Chicago, Ill. Climate, shooting and fishing, imports and exports; health resorts, minerals, direct shipping routes from U. S., living conditions, travel, opportunities for employment. Free booklets on: Orange-growing, apple-growing, sugar-growing, maize-growing; viticulture; sheep and fruit ranching.
- 21. ✦ Africa Part 4 Portuguese East**
R. G. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc. (Postage 3 cents.)
- 22. Africa Part 5 Morocco**
GEORGE E. HOLT, care *Adventure*. Travel, tribes, customs, history, topography, trade.
- 23. Africa Part 6 Tripoli**
CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, care *Adventure*. Including the Sahara Tuaregs and caravan routes. Traveling, exploring, customs, caravan trade.
- 24. Africa Part 7 Egypt, Tunis, Algeria**
(Editor to be appointed.) Travel, history, ancient and modern; monuments, languages, races, customs, commerce.
- 25. Africa Part 8 Sudan**
W. T. MOFFAT, 67 Burlington Road, Fulham, London; S. W. 6, England. Climate, prospects, trading, traveling, customs, history.
- 26. Turkey and Asia Minor**
(Editor to be appointed.) Travel, history, geography, races, languages, customs, trade opportunities.
- 27. Bulgaria, Roumania**
(Editor to be appointed.) Travel, history, topography, languages, customs, trade opportunities.
- 28. Albania**
ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.
- 29. Jugo-Slavia and Greece**
LIEUT. WILLIAM JENNA, Plattsburg Barracks, N. Y. History, politics, customs, geography, language, travel, outdoor life.
- 30. Scandinavia**
ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.
- 31. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland**
FRED F. FLEISCHER, care *Adventure*. History, politics, customs, languages, trade opportunities, travel, sports, outdoor life.
- 32. Great Britain**
THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Ave., W. C. 2, London, England. General information.
- 33. South America Part 1 Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile**
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure*. Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.
- 34. South America Part 2 Venezuela, the Guianas and Brazil**
WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Room 423, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, inhabitants, languages, hunting and fishing.
- 35. South America Part 3 Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay**
WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Room 423, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Geography, travel, agriculture, cattle, timber, inhabitants, camping and exploration, general information. Questions regarding employment not answered.
- 36. Central America**
CHARLES BELL EMERSON, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, languages, game, conditions, minerals, trading.
- 37. Mexico Part 1 Northern**
J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Border States of old Mexico—Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, inhabitants, hunting, history, industries.
- 38. Mexico Part 2 Southern and Lower California**
C. R. MAHAFFEY, care of Roadmaster, S. P. Co., San José, Calif. Lower California; Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, inhabitants, business and general conditions.
- 39. ✦ Canada Part 1 Height of Land, Region of Northern Quebec and Northern Ontario (except Strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); Southeastern Ungava and Keewatin**
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber, customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit. (Postage 3 cents.)
- 40. ✦ Canada Part 2 Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario**
HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel, camping. (Postage 3 cents.)
- 41. ✦ Canada Part 3 Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario**
A. D. L. ROBINSON, 173 Maple Ave., Pembroke, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing. (Postage 3 cents.)
- 42. Canada Part 4 Hunters Island and English River District**
T. F. PHILLIPS, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. Fishing, camping, hunting, trapping, canoeing, climate, topography, travel.
- 43. Canada Part 5 Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta**
ED. L. CARSON, Monroe, Wash. Including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.
- 44. ✦ Canada Part 6 Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Northern Keewatin**
REECE H. HAGUE, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel. (Postage 3 cents.)
- 45. ✦ Canada Part 7 New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Southeastern Quebec**
JAS. P. B. BELFORD, Codrington, Ont., Canada. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper industry, water-power. (Postage 3 cents.)
- 46. Alaska**
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, Larkspur, Calif. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.
- 47. Baffinland and Greenland**
VICTOR SHAW, care *Adventure*. Hunting, expeditions, dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).
- 48. Western U. S. Part 1 Calif., Ore., Wash., Nev., Utah and Ariz.**
E. E. HARRMAN, 2303 W. 23rd St., Los Angeles, Calif. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.
- 49. Western U. S. Part 2 New Mexico**
H. F. ROBINSON, 200-202 Korber Block, Albuquerque, N. M. Agriculture, automobile routes, Indians, Indian dances, including the snake dance; oil-fields; hunting, fishing, camping; history, early and modern.
- 50. Western U. S. Part 3 Colo. and Wyo.**
FRANK MIDDLETON, 509 Fremont St., Laramie, Wyo. Geography, agriculture, stock-raising, mining, hunting, fishing, trapping, camping and outdoor life in general.
- 51. Western U. S. Part 4 Mont. and the Northern Rocky Mountains**
CHESTER C. DAVIS, Helena, Mont. Agriculture, mining, northwestern oil-fields, hunting, fishing, camping, automobile tours, guides, early history.

✦ (Enclose addressed envelope with three cents in stamps NOT attached)

52. Western U. S. Part 5 Idaho and Surrounding Country

R. T. NEWMAN, Box 833, Anaconda, Mont. Camping, shooting, fishing, equipment, information on expeditions, history and inhabitants.

53. Western U. S. Part 6 Tex. and Okla.

J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Minerals, agriculture, travel, topography, climate, hunting, history, industries.

54. Middle Western U. S. Part 1 The Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.

JOSEPH MILLS HANSON (late Capt. A. E. F.), care *Adventure*. Hunting, fishing, travel. Especially, early history of Missouri Valley.

55. Middle Western U. S. Part 2 Mo. and Ark.

JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Also the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big-timber sections.

56. Middle Western U. S. Part 3 Ind., Ill., Mich., Wis., Minn. and Lake Michigan

JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Fishing, clamming, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, early history, legends.

57. Middle Western U. S. Part 4 Mississippi River

GEO. A. ZERR, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton P. O., Ingram, Pa. Routes, connections, itineraries; all phases of river steamer and power-boat travel; history and idiosyncrasies of the river and its tributaries. Questions regarding methods of working one's way should be addressed to Mr. Spears. (See next section.)

58. Eastern U. S. Part 1 Miss., O., Tenn., Michigan and Hudson Valleys, Great Lakes, Adirondacks

RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif. Automobile, motor-cycle, bicycle and pedestrian touring; shanty-boat-ing, river-tripping; outfit suggestions, including those for the transcontinental trails; game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs.

59. Eastern U. S. Part 2 Motor-Boat and Canoe Cruising on Delaware and Chesapeake Bays and Tributary Rivers

HOWARD A. SHANNON, care of *Adventure*. Motor-boat equipment and management. Oystering, crabbing, eeling, black bass, pike, sea-trout, croakers; general fishing in tidal waters. Trapping and trucking on Chesapeake Bay. Water fowl and upland game in Maryland and Virginia. Early history of Delaware, Virginia and Maryland.

60. Eastern U. S. Part 3 Marshes and Swamplands of the Atlantic Coast from Philadelphia to Jacksonville

HOWARD A. SHANNON, care of *Adventure*. Okefenokee and Dismal, Ocranoke and the Marshes of Glynn; Croatan Indians of the Carolinas. History, traditions, customs, hunting, modes of travel, snakes.

61. Eastern U. S. Part 4 Southern Appalachians

WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Room 423, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Alleghanies, Blue Ridge, Smokies, Cumberland Plateau, Highland Rim. Topography, climate, timber, hunting and fishing, automobiling, national forests, general information.

62. Eastern U. S. Part 5 Tenn., Ala., Miss., N. and S. C., Fla. and Ga.

HARBURG LEEKE, Box 432, Orlando, Fla. Except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

63. Eastern U. S. Part 6 Maine

DR. G. E. HAYMONS, 70 Main Street, Bangor, Me. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

A.—Radio

DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J. Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.

B.—Mining and Prospecting

VECTOR SHAW, care *Adventure*. Territory anywhere on the continent of North America. Questions on mines, mining law, mining, mining methods or practice; where and how to prospect, how to outfit; how to make the mine after it is located; how to work it and how to sell it; general geology necessary for miner or prospector, including the precious and base metals and economic minerals such as pitchblende or uranium, gypsum, mica, cryolite, etc. Questions regarding investment or the merits of any particular company are excluded.

C.—Old Songs That Men Have Sung

A department for collecting hitherto unpublished specimens and for answering questions concerning all songs of the out-of-doors that have had sufficient virility to outlast their immediate day; chanteys, "forebitters," ballads—songs of outdoor men—sailors, lumberjacks, soldiers, cowboys, pioneers, rivermen, canal-men, men of the Great

Lakes, voyageurs, railroad men, miners, hoboes, plantation hands, etc.—R. W. GORDON, 1262 Euclid Ave., Berkeley, Calif.

D.—Weapons, Past and Present

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, ammunition and edged weapons. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should not be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district.)

1.—All Shotguns, including foreign and American makes; wing shooting. JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*.

2.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers, including foreign and American makes. DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. 3, Lock Box 75, Salem, Ore.

3.—Edged Weapons, and Firearms Prior to 1899. Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheel-lock and snap-haunce varieties. LEWIS APPLETON BARKER, 40 University Road, Brookline, Mass.

E.—Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.

F.—Tropical Forestry

WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Room 423, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Tropical forests and forest products; their economic possibilities; distribution, exploration, etc.

G.—Aviation

LIEUT.-COL. W. G. SCHAUFFLER, JR., 2940 Newark St., N. W., Washington, D. C. Airplanes; airships; aeronautical motors; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; aeronautical laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. No questions answered regarding aeronautical stock-promotion companies.

H.—Army Matters, United States and Foreign

FRED. F. FLEISCHER, care of *Adventure*. United States Military history, military policy. National Defense Act of 1920. Regulations and matters in general for organized reserves. Army and uniform regulations, infantry drill regulations, field service regulations. Tables of organization. Citizens' military training camps. Foreign: Strength and distribution of foreign armies before the war. Uniforms. Strength of foreign armies up to date. History of armies of countries covered by Mr. Fleischer in general "Ask Adventure" section. General: Tactical questions on the late war. Detailed information on all operations during the late war from the viewpoint of the German high command. Questions regarding enlisted personnel and officers, except such as are published in Officers' Directory, can not be answered.

I.—American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal

ARTHUR WOODWARD, 217 W. 125th St., New York. Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.

J.—STANDING INFORMATION

For Camp-Fire Stations write J. Cox, care *Adventure*.

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications. For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dept. of Com., Wash., D. C.

For the Philippines, Porto Rico, and customs receiver-ships in Santo Domingo and Haiti, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also Dept. of the Interior Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agri., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The Pan-American Union for general information on Latin-American matters or for specific data. Address L. S. ROWE, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For R. C. M. P., Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 28 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Com., Wash., D. C. National Rifle Association of America, Brig. Gen. Fred H. Phillips, Jr., Sec'y, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Wash., D. C.

United States Revolver Ass'n. W. A. MORRALL, Sec'y-Treas., Hotel Virginia, Columbus, O.

National Parks, how to get there and what to do when there. Address National Park Service, Washington, D. C.

Personal

READERS have been asking for the autobiographies of "Ask Adventure" editors; and those staff members who believe that a few words about themselves will promote better acquaintanceship all around, are responding to the request. The order in which these autobiographies are printed doesn't signify anything. They are withdrawn from the file at random. This particular life-story happens to come from one who only recently succeeded Mr. George L. Catton in charge of section 41, Mr. Catton having unfortunately found it necessary to resign:

Pembroke, Ont., Canada.

I am an outdoors woman. Give me that—or give me death! My taste for the wild began years before I was born—when my paternal grandparents, after having spent most of their combined and considerable fortune in the gay life of the Paris of Louis Philippe—part of the huge fortune of the great Scotch painter, Sir David Wilkie, my grandmother's uncle—and, obeying the call of the wilderness, emigrated to an uninhabited section of country one hundred miles north of Toronto, in the year 1837.

There they found a band of Ojibway Indians on a reserve across the little lake from them. But not so reserved were those Indians but that more than once they brandished before the terrified eyes of my grandmother their rude tomahawks. Then my grandfather, an English physician, won their gratitude and friendship by giving them free doctoring. And in my father's virgin forest no one but an Indian was allowed to cut a tree, which they freely did, "without money and without price," with which to make their baskets and "hand sleighs."

So I love the Indians, and know more about them than do most Canadian women. And some day I hope to break into *Adventure* with an Indian story—as I have broken into three or four other magazines. For I am a writer, as yet largely embryonic, a browser in green, uncropped meadows, a Rambler in unpeopled places, with a soul that thirsts for adventure, a heart that loves all living things, and a foot itching with the *Wanderlust*. Let's go!—AIMEE D. LINTON ROBINSON.

THE ill news is received of the sudden death of Frank Morton, "Ask Adventure" expert for Australia, following an operation for appendicitis. The name of his successor appears under the Australia section (No. 8) on page 183. For myself, unfortunately, I never had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Morton, but in his letters the fact shone out that he was not only a scholar and an authority in his field, but also a good fellow and a good friend. Shortly before his death he wrote at my request the appended autobiography, which summarizes his career probably as well as anything could in such a brief space:

Sydney, N. S. W., Australia.

I'm pretty well known here and in New Zealand. Been Literary Editor of the *Triad* for a long time. Prior to that had a good grounding in Australia, India and the Far East. Only magazine in America I write for occasionally is the *Smart Set*. Either Mencken or Nathan would tell you things about me, I dare say.

I have lived and worked in every Australian State bar two, and in New Zealand. Was three years in Singapore and three in India. War correspondent in Pahang—rising of the Orang Kaya Pahlawan. Special correspondent with the Opium Commission and Mrs. Besant (first tour) right through India. Went with Mortimer Durand mission to Kabul. Rather by way of being an authority on that part of the earth—fad of mine, though much water has run under the bridges since I left Asia.

Was at one time before the mast on an American windjammer—*Conqueror*, of Boston, Captain Lathrop—and am prepared to damn American windjammers with the next fellow. Once taught in a mission-school, Methodist Episcopal Mission of America. —! The queer things I've done!—FRANK MORTON.

The full statement of the sections, as given in this issue, is printed only in alternate issues.

Trading among Indian Tribes

ALSO a few words on slavery as practised by the Aztecs:

Question:—"Can the answers to the following questions be found in any up-to-date book on Central America anthropology? What would be the best book for this purpose?"

Was it the custom of the ancient Central Americans to send caravans hundreds of miles from the home locality for trading purposes?

Was this trade a community or an individual venture?

Were these traders to be found among all tribes, or were certain tribes noted for their trading ability?

Were these traders immune from attack by warring tribes through whose territory they passed?

In what articles did they trade?

Were slaves used to carry the packs?

What was the condition of these slaves?

Were they purchased or captured?

Could they earn their freedom? If so, how?

I have been trying for some time to find a book which gives a comprehensive picture of the life and customs of the ancient people of Central America and Mexico, so far as it is known. It seems as though most of the books published before 1900 waste half of their pages in resurrecting the Ten Lost Tribes; Madoc and his Welshmen; the Phoenicians; Atlantis, and several other pet theories.

These Central American civilizations seem to me to be indigenous, and I would like to find a book giving the facts—the latest discoveries and so on. Something on the order of the 'Handbook of the American Indian North of Mexico.'—FRED K. SCHWALM, St. Louis, Mo.

Answer, by Mr. Woodward:—I will say that you picked out a subject about which little is known or has been written. About the only recent publication is "Myths and Legends of Mexico and Peru" by Lew Spence. In this volume he devotes some space to the customs of those peoples of whom you ask.

In answer to your first question, "Was it the custom of ancient Central Americans to send caravans hundreds of miles to trade?" I would say no. Certain tribes of eastern Honduras and Colombia and the Mayas of Yucatan did trade with one another. Such trade was communistic. That is, one tribe would manufacture nothing but pottery, another canoes, still another, ornaments; some made excellent weapons. These goods were transported from tribe to tribe by members of each tribe until they reached their destination, and the goods to be exchanged for them would travel back over the same route. In this way any extensive caravans were done away with.

There was a system of slavery among the ancient Mexicans; but the slaves were regarded more in the light of captives of war destined as sacrifices on the altars of the War God, rather than as menials in private service.

Little is known of the actual life and customs of the natives of Mexico and Central America prior to the coming of the Spaniards. Many volumes have been written on the subject of excavations and of the state of affairs in those sections of country as Cortez and his *adelantados* found them.

The majority of the native manuscripts, if such they may be called, were burned by the zealous priests and pious soldiery of Spain, as documents inspired by the devil. Later under the teaching of the priesthood an attempt was made to revive the art of picture-writing; but such attempts were hopelessly tinctured with European thoughts and show evidence of a submersion of the original native ideas.

As to a recent book on the subject, the one by Spence, which I have noted above, is perhaps the latest. In scattered papers dealing with the question one might perhaps discover odd pages bearing upon it; but to my knowledge no recent publication dealing at length with the subject has been written. I have been in touch with Professor Marshall H. Saville on these questions; and if any one knows about Central America and Mexico it is he, having written many books on these countries and done a lot of work in Yucatan. He also quotes Spence's book as being the latest.

As to the theories connected with the Phoenicians, Welsh, Japanese, Chinese, Hebrews, etc., such speculations stir up men's minds and give us clues to follow and often lead to other things apart from the original cause of the turmoil that prove much more interesting. Nope, I refuse to enter into any controversy regarding the original "Who's Who" of North America, although I have seen evidences of pretty positive proof that the west coast of North America, particularly San Francisco Bay, had civilized callers many, many moons before Sir Francis Drake beached his *Golden Hind* in what is now known as Drake's Bay, or Anza ever led his settlers north from Mexico—but that's another story. Sorry I couldn't help you more than I did—but—call again.

Free service, but don't ask us to pay the postage to get it to you.

Tax-Sale Lands of Muskoka and Parry Sound

BUYING scenery:

Question:—"I am offered so-called 'tax-sale lands' in Muskoka and Parry Sound districts at a rather ridiculously low price, the idea being that the lands are sold for taxes, therefore the low price. I quite understand now that the land is very likely not of much worth—rocks, brush, swamp, etc.—but as my idea is to start fur-farming it perhaps would suit nicely. What I should like to know however is:

1. To whom could I write to find the legal status of ownership and the unpaid taxes, etc.? Is it to the county treasurer or clerk of the districts? And where are they located for the above two districts; I mean in what city is their office?

2. Is the land likely to be suitable for fur-farming in your opinion?

3. Do you think a good photographer could make some money in Summer by making postal cards? I understand the above country is a great tourist place.

Please omit my name if this should be published."

—C. K., Shawinnigan Falls, Que., Canada.

Answer, by A. D. L. Robinson:—Tax-sale lands should always, of course, be low in price, inasmuch as the purchaser is buying a "pig in a poke." Almost all Muskoka land that I have seen consists of lakes, streams, rocks and scrub forest—third-growth timber of poplar, birch and cedar. Occasionally there is a patch of arable land, but the other kinds are most frequent.

For information regarding Muskoka district lands write to the District Clerk of Muskoka, Gravenhurst, Ont., or Tax Collector, same town. For Parry Sound, either of these two men at Parry Sound, Ont.

2. In my opinion the land should be suitable for fur-farming of any kind. You are aware, of course, that fur-farming takes considerable capital, with some years of waiting for results. I am enclosing a clipping from yesterday's daily *Globe*, Toronto, on fur-farming. I thought the figures and information might interest you and be of help.

3. No; speaking generally, I think all Muskoka has been pretty well done by camera—like its timber. But wonderful scenery abounds, and sometimes a good picture of an unusual bit of unknown or rare scenery brings a good price from a magazine which prints such things.

Fishing, Crabbing, Hunting, Trapping on Chesapeake Bay

A PLAYGROUND for sportsmen within a few hours' run of the nation's capital:

Question:—"Please send me information as to crabbing and fishing on Chesapeake Bay; also trapping and hunting."—J. L. NICHOLSON, Portsmouth, Va.

Answer, by Mr. Shannon:—I know of no better locality anywhere than may be found on the Eastern Shore of Maryland and possibly Virginia.

Crisfield is the center of the crabbing and fishing industry from a commercial standpoint, but good money can be made almost anywhere in that section if you want to go into it on a commercial scale.

Barren Island, Hooper's Island, Taylor's Island, and the creeks and rivers running into the bay near them are ideal from the fisherman's standpoint. Trout, hardhead, rock, croakers and other fish are caught with hook and line. Shad and herring are netted. Crabs are caught with trot-lines baited with salted eels, the eels being trapped in eel-traps.

Muskrats, skunk, raccoon and some fox may be found all through this section. Some of the biggest muskrat colonies in the country may be found in the salt marshes along the bay.

A good sturdy power-boat, camping-equipment, guns and tackle would be about all you need. Barren Island is practically deserted, and there are dozens of empty houses on it which you could occupy if you wished. Nearest trading-point is six miles away on Hooper's Island.

Same thing applies to Kent Island farther up the bay. You will find a fine lot of people, and they will treat you right just as long as you mind your own business and don't interfere with their fish-traps and boats.

"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing whatever but reply postage and self-addressed envelop.

Exploring Tanganyika Territory

FORMERLY known as German East Africa:

Question:—"I enclose twelve cents in stamps and self-addressed envelop. I have heard of the volcano Ngoro-Ngoro in East Africa near Moshi. Am much interested in this region and would like to secure what information I can. It is in what was formerly known as German East Africa. The Germans knew of it before the war but kept it a secret. I would like to explore this region.

1. Where is the volcano Ngoro-Ngoro? Size? Dead or living? And is it easy to reach?

2. Are Mt. Killimanjaro and Ngoro-Ngoro near each other?

3. Climate of this region in general? Living conditions? General language? Natives friendly or warlike?

4. What equipment should two persons need? Clothes? Rifle; what kind? Side arms? I prefer six-shooter to automatic. What caliber?

5. Is it possible for two to live off the country for a year or so?

6. Do you have to get permission from any Government to explore and hunt or fish? Any maps of this region or books on it?

We hope to go some time next year."—STEPHEN J. HOWE, New Bedford, Mass.

Answer, by Mr. Beadle:—Sorry, but the volcanic mountain of Ngoro-Ngoro is not within my territory, and I know no more about it than the vague reports of it since the war.

Re question 3. General climate very good indeed on the uplands; feverish near the coast. Nearly every tribe has a different dialect based on Bantu mostly; but the *lingua franca* is Kiswahili—a mixture of Arabic and Bantu.

4. Light khaki-stuff shirts and pants, etc.; but all and much better obtainable (cheaper) at Mom-basa; rifles also procured there. Better to have English guns as ammunition is more readily found.

A revolver is really not required; if you insist, take usual six-shooter. I agree with you; less easily jammed.

5. No, sir! Quite impossible for a white to live off country.

6. No permission required to explore, but licenses have to be bought for hunting; \$250 for two elephants; \$50 for small game. Maps pretty unreliable as yet; ask Brentano's, Fifth Avenue, New York, for the latest.

Whaling in the Old Days

PRESENT-DAY methods save lives—human lives, that is—but destroy the adventure of the thing:

Question:—"I am desirous of obtaining any information relative to the whale fisheries at the present time, the boats existent at present and also the lives of the old time whalemén. Any data you may be able to supply me with will be appreciated."
—F. F. MAGRUDER, Washington, D. C.

Answer, by Mr. Rieseberg:—To begin with there are now only eighteen vessels engaged in the whale fisheries in the United States. These vessels ply their trade in a very different manner from those of the past, and from your letter I take it for granted that you desire something relative to the old-timers instead of the present expeditions.

The whalemén obtained for these expeditions, which usually lasted a period of from two to five years, were gathered from the flotsam and jetsam of derelict humanity—men who braved danger and daring and heart-breaking labor, brutality and severe privations in all its worst phases. The old Yankee captains or skippers of these vessels were very proficient men, but when shipping a crew for a whaling trip they invariably preferred "green men" to real and experienced sailors, the recruits being baited by lurid and fancy circulars or posters which depicted promises of easy work and big compensation, romance and mystery. Many were defrauded of advance pay which was promised them previous to making the trip; and if an expedition failed they (the men) came back in debt to the company hiring them.

Among the species of whales most widely sought and considered most valuable were the "right whale" and the "sperm," the former for its oil and whalebone, and the latter for its superior oil and spermaceti. Each of these whales had its particular menace to the whalemén. The sperms have a terrible tooth-armed lower jaw capable of biting a whaleboat in two, and the right whale a powerful tail that lashes in great semi-circles to destroy everything in its wake.

From the lookout's station on the to'gallant cross-trees men scanned the sea, watching for the faint blue vapor which marks the presence of a whale; and with the shout of "There she blows" the ship sprang into action—then with utmost speed the whaleboat was lowered away, and swiftly and stealthily swept over the water to stalk the whale, forced by the powerful sweep of long ash oars in the hands of six brawny men.

If all went well, the small boat stole closer and closer to the huge black mass; and with the mate's command, "Give it to him" the iron was hurled and buried in the blubber of the prey. Then began

a battle royal between the most powerful of living creatures and the six men of the puny boat. Stung by the pain caused due to the iron in his flesh, the creature dashed forward, while several fathoms of line attached to the iron whirled with a roar through the bow chock and leaped from the tubs like a living serpent. The whizzing line was never allowed to slacken, and had to be kept clear and cooled by throwing water on it until the whale was tired enough to approach for the "kill," to which the perils of striking were as nothing. Even when the death-blow was given, rarely did a whale die without a "flurry," and in his titanic death-struggles many a boat was stove and life lost.

All the above was in the process of the real old-time whaling, while now among the eighteen remaining whaling vessels gun harpoons are shot to catch the whale and bombs are used to kill him—mere slaughter with no element of sport or danger.

When you get something for nothing, don't make the other fellow pay the postage on it.

White Men's Ways in Hongkong and Shanghai

GET your job before you go, or more than likely you'll be out of luck:

Question.—"I am writing to you for information relative to the eastern part of China. I have acquired a fair sum of money and plan to locate in either Shanghai or Hongkong—perhaps permanently.

Is the climate of Hongkong as humid as it is reputed to be? What is the climate of Shanghai?

Would it be advisable to purchase a cottage, rent one or stay at a hotel? If I had a home of my own there would I require more than two servants? Of what nationality? Approximate wages?

Are there any semi-exclusive clubs in the American or British quarters?

I am twenty-one years of age and am at present employed as an accountant for one of the largest insurance companies in the United States. Would this training stand me in good stead in securing a position in that country? Would you advise my endeavoring to locate with some concern before starting, or would it be feasible for me to wait until I had arrived there? What company would you advise me to get in touch with for a position? Either shipping, exporting, insurance, bank or steamship company.

Do the British lead the Americans in enterprise in Shanghai and Hongkong? Are Americans regarded favorably by the natives in regard to transacting business with same? What is the general attitude of the Chinese toward the Americans, in their own country, of course?

If this is published, kindly withhold name and address.

Answer, by Mr. Halton:—Must first warn you that it is not easy to obtain employment in China for the reason that employees are usually hired in America or Europe and are under contract for two or three years.

The humidity at Hongkong and Shanghai is very heavy in the monsoon season—that is, from

May to October—running as high as 98 per cent. This makes it very trying with temperatures ranging from 80 to 95 degrees. Hongkong Winters are delightful, more so than those of Shanghai, where it is much colder. It would be best to stay at a hotel or boarding-house for the first few months and then rent. You could get along with two servants, Chinese—a houseboy-cook and a coolie. Of course if you keep a sedan-chair in Hongkong or a rickshaw in Shanghai you will need more coolies as each Chinese servant has his own particular "pidgin" or work. Wages for a good No. 1 boy are about \$30 Mex. per month, while a coolie will demand \$10 to \$15 Mex.

•There are fine clubs in both cities which are exclusive, in that they put you on probation for three months as a visiting member, and then the balloting committee finally passes on your application.

Your training as accountant in the insurance business will of course fit you for any kind of clerical work with European or American houses. By all means secure a position before starting for China as positions are not easy to get on arrival for the above-stated reason.

The following companies do a large business in the Orient: Standard Oil Co., 120 Broadway, New York; Pacific Mail S. S. Co., 508 California St., San Francisco, Calif.; The Admiral Line, L. C. Smith Building, Seattle, Wash.; Canadian Pacific Steamship Lines, Montreal, Canada.

Anderson & Meyer, Shanghai, are agents for several large American insurance companies.

British trade with China has always led all other nations'; but since the war American trade has greatly increased. Americans are generally popular with the Chinese, due largely to our altruistic attitude toward them.

If there are any other questions you would like to ask do not hesitate; I am glad to be of service.

If you don't want an answer enough to enclose FULL return postage to carry it, you don't want it.

Rebuking the Hi-Jack

HE WON'T give you a chance; why give him one?

Question.—"I want to get a good pocket gun to be carried constantly while traveling. I am a good shot with a .45, but this caliber is too bulky for concealment.

I am a construction 'stiff'; that is, I follow the railroad work and reclamation projects, etc., and have been held up by 'hi-Jacks' three times in the last year, losing about \$450 altogether, and have an idea to give them a battle next time.

What is the best caliber, .32 or .38, automatic or revolver? Personally I prefer the auto; but what is your opinion?

Would you recommend the shoulder holster or hip pocket for quick action in a pinch?

I want to be able to have the gun thoroughly concealed so that a casual observer would not know I was carrying it. I seldom wear a vest. How could I conceal the strap of the holster? How do I get the gun out *pronto* if the vest is buttoned?

Do you know how a gun is carried up the sleeve? If so, please explain how to get it out fast.

What is the best type of shoulder holster, and

where can I get one?"—WILLIAM E. HOLTZ, Cosmopolis, Wash.

Answer, by Mr. Wiggins:—I advise you to carry your cash in traveler's checks, as they are of no use to any one but yourself, and you can stop payment on them at any time, thus catching the chap who frisked you when he tries to cash them.

The "hi-Jack" always has the drop on you before he says it, and I really don't think it's worth while for the average man to try to shoot it out with him; better have a little small change and the checks as I mentioned.

I have said what I think is best in the case you mentioned; now I'll tell you what you asked in the gun line, as nearly as I can.

Get a .38 Smith & Wesson hammerless, blue-steel 3-inch barrel, pack it in your right or left hand coat pocket loaded with smokeless cartridges and practise shooting through that pocket for a spot the size of a man's abdomen. It's the deadliest trick of the gunfighter of which have I any knowledge. A man usually walks with his hands in his pockets, or at least can so train himself when in the places where he might expect to be stood up, and a move to draw anything in the gun line and shoot would be only a mild form of suicide. But a bullet from a pocket will fix the worst of them so he won't care much about the future.

I remember the hammerless because it has no moving parts that can catch in cloth and tie up the revolver, as can a hammer gun. And an automatic will hang after the first shot if so fired, because the empty shell is not allowed to clear the ejector port due to the pocket lining throwing it back when ejected, and thus jamming the slide back. Those are my findings, as well as those of Major Pollard.

I may add that I have found the .380 Remington pistol a very reliable and accurate weapon, and very fast when pulled from the hip-pocket holster, an affair that is buttoned down to the pocket and does not pull out with the pistol as do most holsters of this sort. I can throw a tin can, the common tomato sort, into the air with my right hand, pull the pistol from my pocket with the same hand, throw off the safety and hit the can twice before it reaches the ground. While this is not as fast as the work done by McGivern, yet it's faster than I ever saw any one else do.

Colt and Savage automatics in .380 caliber are also good, and I have done good shooting with them; but don't fall for any of the cheap mail-order junk being peddled now.

The spring shoulder holster is very good, and can be worn so that even without a vest the straps are concealed going over and around the right shoulder and back of the holster under the coat, across the back. They are very fast, too.

I will recommend you to write to any of the following firms, which make these spring shoulder holsters, and make them right, being old-timers at the business: Capt. A. H. Hardy, 2345 Elm Place, Denver, Colo.; H. H. Heiser Holster Co., Heiser Bldg., Denver, Colo.; Al Furstnow, Miles City, Mont. I think a good one will cost about five dollars, delivered, for any particular gun you name.

I don't think much of that old "sleeve-draw" stunt; see my advise to Merrill Perry in the *Adventure* for Aug. 30th, 1922.

I enclose a little ballistics list of revolvers.

Indians of the Canadian North

A FEW sources of information regarding them:

Question:—"Would you be kind enough to send me the names of publications available containing detailed information on the Indians of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Keewatin, also the system of Government and police.

Am contemplating the production of a series of motion pictures the locale of which is as above, and I would like to have all details as near correct as possible, especially the manners and customs, religion, superstitions, dress, etc.

Am enclosing reply coupons to defray expenses of reply."—CARYL S. FLEMING, New York.

Answer, by Mr. Hague:—Probably the greatest authority on the Indians of northern Canada is Duncan F. Scott, Deputy Superintendent General, Indian Affairs, Ottawa. Mr. Scott, I am informed, has a most complete library of works dealing with Indians, and I am sure if you wrote him he would be able to give you much valuable material.

All matters appertaining to the Indians are under the control of the authorities at Ottawa, and all northern Territories are under the control of the Department of the Interior, Ottawa. By writing to the latter address you could secure booklets giving data on methods of Government, police systems, etc.

"The People of the Plains," by Amelia M. Pagett, and "Thirty-one Years on the Plains and in the Mountains," by Wm. F. Drennan, are two good works dealing with the Canadian Indians, and you should be able to secure them without difficulty.

The Indians of this country are rather a decadent race. In fact the real Indian is almost extinct, those remaining being half and quarter breeds.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

Port Elizabeth for the Bricklayer

THE town is located on Algoa Bay, Cape of Good Hope:

Question:—"I have sort of a wandering foot and want to go to Africa. I am twenty, able-bodied and a bricklayer. Have worked from Seattle, Wash., to San Diego and from there to here, and have been able to hold my job. I am getting \$70 per week now. I don't care much where I go, just so it don't get cold.

What part of your territory would you advise?

Could a white man make a living there at my trade?

How cold does it get? Does it rain much?

Would October or November be as good as any other time to get there?

Which do they do the most building with—brick, stone, tile or wood."—P. M. DANIEL, Lakeworth, Fla.

Answer, by Capt. Franklin:—I would advise you to go to Port Elizabeth. A man could make a good living there at your trade. It never freezes in Port Elizabeth, but there is a rainy season for three months. The best time to get there is in February. They do most of their building of brick and stone.



LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, give your own name if possible. All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal Star to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

WARD, J. C. Last heard of in Cleveland, Ohio. Last seen on the Missouri River. His partner "Red" would like to hear from him.—Address J. L. CAMERON, 33 Ordinance Co., Rock Island Arsenal, Ill.

COSTELLOE, JACK. Australian. Last heard of in Ecuador. Age thirty-two, height five feet ten inches, black curly hair. Speaks Spanish fluently. Please write to his brother.—Address PAUL COSTELLOE, 2 Nelson St., Coburg, Melbourne, Australia.

BUSHBY, EDWARD T.—Last heard of in New York State about 1921. Any information will be appreciated.—Address PAUL COSTELLOE, 2 Nelson St., Coburg, Melbourne, Australia.

FARIES, CECIL R. Ross and Orbadle. Cecil was in the third Cavalry in 1921, but was discharged at Fort Myers, Va., in 1921. Age twenty-four years. Ross Faries is nineteen years old. Orbadle Faries is about eighteen years of age. Any information will be appreciated by their brother.—KERZON E. M. FARIES, U. S. S. Mississippi, care of Postmaster, New York City, or San Francisco, Calif.

BURROUGH, STANLEY. Stone-mason by trade. Left Lancaster, England, about 1912 for the United States. Last heard of in Canada. Any information will be appreciated.—Address J. BURROUGH, 27 Coloetto St., Waretree, Liverpool, England.

HOLLY, A. J. or Albert. Last heard of was in Clay County, West Virginia. Was talking of going to Idaho about twenty years ago. His son Henry Franklin Holly served in World War. Any information will be appreciated by his brother.—Address HENRY HOLLY, Box 346, Kenova, West Virginia.

NORDAHL, THOMAS. Last heard from about eighteen years ago. Age about fifty years. Tailor by trade. Last seen in Great Falls, Montana. Any information will be appreciated by his son.—Address FRANCIS J. NORDAHL, 867 S. Main St., Salt Lake City, Utah.

LE MIRE, MARTHA MRS. or her children, Walter, Loretta, or Mary Teresa Le Mire. Last heard from in Great Falls, and Cascade, Montana. Any information will be appreciated.—Address FRANCIS J. NORDAHL, 867 S. Main St., Salt Lake City, Utah.

GARNIER, MARTIN. Write home to Jinx. Important news. Or anyone knowing Garnier's address please write to me.—Address W. JENKINS, 429 Nussbaum Ave., Fort Wayne, Ind.

GARRABRANDT, ANNA B. Left home in Brooklyn three years ago last April. Last heard from in Massachusetts. Age thirty-eight years, four feet five inches, dark complexion. Have good news for her. Any information will be appreciated.—Address Mrs. F. CUNNINGHAM, 319 Adelphi St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

CHUCK HARRIS, Iikwabbe, Slim Hawkens, Big Clamence, Wild Bill Cody, Ed Larson, Tex Farrell, Kid Reynoldas, Charles Warrant, Gus Hughes, Jean Stuaurett, Short Murrey, Ed Rice of Dallas, Texas, and Jack Kennedy. Please write.—Address A. H. CODY, care of L. B., 158 Central Ave., Buffalo, N. Y.

BERNSTEIN, ABE. Left home about eighteen years ago. Age about forty years. Any information will be appreciated by his mother.—Address SARAH BERNSTEIN, 45 Pulaski St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

UNCLAIMED MAIL

ADDLEMAN, Frank C.; Aldridge, F. P.; August, J. E.; Baily, Dick; Baptiste, Jean; Balensifer, Frank A. W.; Bell, Raymond; Bertsch, Elizabeth; Beverley, C. S.; Bishop, L. S.; Blaicher, Chas. A.; Bonner, Major J. S.; Boes, Mrs.; Boulton, Gay A.; Brown, Mrs. W. E.; Buckley, Ray; Buetin, F. W.; Butterfield, M. E.; Bryon, J.; Busby, Edward P.; Cadwallader, John Richard; Caples, Albert; Carr, John; Carpenter, Capt. Robert S.; Cassidy, Edward A.; Center, Jack; Champlain, Geo. W.; Chartrand, A.; "Chink," Clark, Ernest S.; Coles, Bobby; Corbett, Fred P.; Coleman, J. J.; Collins, J. P.; Connor, A. M.; Cook, Elliott D.; Cook, Wm. N.; Corporal; Courtland, Victor; Crozier, W. Al; Dalton, Fred; Davis; De Brissac, Ricardo; Dennis, F. C.; Donovan; Douglas, Wm.; Drake, Miss J.; Dunn, Ed.; Edwards, Edgar; Erwin, Phil; Fossum, Ralph; Franklin, R.; Fisher, Sgt. R.; Gale, Geo. A.; Garson, Ed; Grahame, Arthur W.; Green, L. E.; Grimm, H. C.; Gunn, P. R.; Hailstrom, Chief; Harmon, Richard A.; Harriss, Walter J.; Haskins, S. S.; Hawkins, M. B.; Hooker, Wm. F.; Hughes, Frank E.; Hunt, Daniel O'Connell; Iverson, Geo. L.; Irving, Thos. L.; Jackson, R. R.; James, Dan; Kelly, C. H.; Kennedy, Paul I.; Kuckaby, Wm. Francis; Lange, Algot; Larisey, Jack; La Sonn, Fred W. Mrs.; Lee, Wm. R.; Lekki, Michael; Lenihan, Robert F.; McAdams, W. B.; McGovern, J. V.; McKaughan, Robert S.; McKee, A. L.; McLane, A.; McNair, Henry S.; MacKintosh, D. T. A.; MacDonald, James; Marut, Ret.; May, B. C.; Miller, Walter; Minor, John; Molitor, Joseph; Moore, Robert; Nelson, F. L.; Nylander, Towne, J.; Ogden, Carl M.; O'Hara, Jack; Overton, C. H.; Parker, G. A.; Parrott, D. C.; Phillips, Buffington; Pigeon, A. M.; Posner, Geo. A.; Raines, Wm. L.; Rich, Bob; Raymond, C. E.; The Southern River; Rogan, Chas. B.; Rutherford, May; Robert, L. Russel; Ryder, H. S.; Ryan, J.; Schafer, Geo.; Schmidt, Geo.; Seville, Mrs. A. L.; Shannon, Howard A.; Sloan, Ch. A.; Simonds, Frank W.; Slaght, E. Olive; Smith, C. O.; Smith, Mrs. Kenneth; Sorensen, Wm. Neil; Starr, Ted; Stewart, E. J.; Stevens, Albert A. Mrs.; Stocking, C. B.; Stonaway, James; Strong, Mr.; St. Clair, Fred; Sullivan, Walter; Swarthout, W. N.; Sweeney, J. E.; Tobin, Kathryn; Tripp, Ed; Thaxter, Kenneth; Van Tyler, Chester; Varner, C. W.; Von Gelucke, Byron; Ward, Frank B.; Warren, C. Chester; Watkins, E. V.; Watson, Elmo Scott; Williams, Grover; Woeller, Erich; Williams, Frank S.

MISCELLANEOUS—WS-XV; R. E. H.; Shroty; 348; C. C. C.; HV. S.; T. W. S.; "Lonely Jack;" 2480; S177284; J. C. H.; 398; W. A. H.

BURNS, BOB or Ralph Scott. Write your old pal of U. S. Marine Jazz Band.—Address "RED" HUFFMAN, 49 E. Grand Ave., Chicago, Ill.

HOOKE, LYNN and Jake Archer. Formerly of Cartage, Texas. Please write.—JAMES BUCKLEY, 6630 N. Campbell Ave., Chicago, Ill.

HART, DAVID WILLIAM or any man who served at Great Lakes, Ill., Naval Training Station in 1920, in Co. 57, Barracks D, Main Station. An old friend would like to hear from you.—Address WILLIAM G. THOMPSON, 947 W. High St., Lexington, Ky.

LITTLE, MARY ANN WESTON. Resident of Hempstead, Heath, London, Eng., about the year 1865-6. Any information will be appreciated by her son.—GEORGE J. LITTLE, 36 Terrace Ave., Hasbrouck Heights, N. J.

WOODWARD, LEE R. Write your sister.—Address BESSIE WOODWARD, 941 Figueroa St., Los Angeles, Calif.

REGER, ANDREW (ENDRE). Hungarian. Five feet five inches, light complexion, blue eyes. Steam engineer by trade. Was working in Nevada mining-camps in 1909-10. Later he prospected in Arizona. Any information will be appreciated by his friends in Canada.—Address V. FIAS, Middle Lake, Sask., Can.

WILCOX, A. M. (father). Many things have happened in the past six months. Please write and this time we will meet without fail.—Address L. W. WILCOX, 708 1/2 K St., Sacramento, Calif.

MARGOSKI or Margowski, David. Roomed with me at number 53 Ioma Calle Poniente, Guat la City, Guatemala, in 1921. Left for New York. Please write.—Address L. W. SPRECHER, 5602 Prairie Ave., Apt. 2, Chicago, Ill.

DALY, CHARLES. Age about twenty-three. Native of Kentucky. Was with me on the army transport *St. Mihiel* in August, 1923. Last seen in New York when he shipped on a trans-marine motor-ship as junior engineer. Write your old pal "Shorty".—MORRIS STATELENDER, 156 Governor St., Paterson, N. J.

PRUITT, JOHN and Roy. John was last heard of at Wayside, Kansas in 1904-6. Was probably employed in an oil company somewhere in Oklahoma, or was in the oil business. Any information in regard to either one will be appreciated by their sister.—FANNIE PRUITT, 1322 N. La Salle, Chicago, Ill.

MAY, WILLIAM SULLIVAN, SR. Formerly a dentist, living at 114 St., between Broadway and Riverside Drive, N. Y. C. Height about five feet eleven inches, several fingers missing. Born in Virginia. Married to Eva Jacobs of Louisville, Ky. Recently seen at Saratoga Race Track and in New York City. Any information will be appreciated by his son.—Address W. S. M., JR., 324 St. Nicholas Ave., N. Y. C.

DUNSTON, ARNOLD. Last heard of in Centerville, Iowa. Use to live in Kansas City, Mo. Any information will be appreciated by his son.—Address CLEO EDWARD DUNSTON, Gen. Del., Kansas City, Mo.

THE following have been inquired for in either the April 30, or May 20, 1924 issues of Adventure. They can get the name and address of the inquirer from this magazine.

ADREON, LLOYD; Albert, Helen C.; Appelgate, William F.; Bedortha, Harry F.; "Coffeebeans," William; Cuddeback, Lavina G.; Drinkard, Emory P.; Hadden, Charlie; Johnson, Walter and Durcy; Kephart, Steve, John, Peter; Martin, Henry and Emma; Meyers, S. J.; McNally, A. B.; Rahmer, William; Reed, Claude; Scanlon, Oliver J.; Sorrel, Robert; Spencer, Bert; Stevenson, I. J.; Willis, Frank; Wood, Elmer.

MISCELLANEOUS—Would like to hear from any of the boys of Battery A, 2nd U. S. Field Artillery.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

JUNE 20TH ISSUE

Besides the complete novel and complete novelette mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

AS GENTLEMEN SHOULD

Bent Avery and the rival fur company.

William Byron Mowery

THE MEAN SECOND *A Slant on Life*

Holystoning on the four-master Fast and Furious.

Bill Adams

THE COMMON GRIEF

Woodsmen fall out.

Negley Farson

THE BIG LITTLE MAN

Shorty and the "playful cuss."

Howard E. Morgan

NECKLACES AND DAN WHEELER *A Four-Part Story Part III*

A prize-fight—and more mysterious doings of the "Spark Gang."

John I. Cochrane

UNCLE DUDLEY KIND O' SCOUTS ROUND

A Texan small-town politician in New York.

Chester T. Crowell

EXACTLY

Discipline was the captain's weakness.

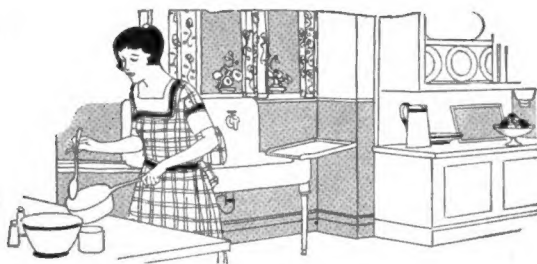
Albert Richard Wetjen



Still Farther Ahead

THE three issues following the next will contain *long stories* by Arthur D. Howden Smith, Frederick Moore, Walter J. Coburn, Gordon MacCreagh, George E. Holt, Charles Victor Fischer, Gordon Young, W. C. Tuttle, and H. C. Bailey; and short stories by Barry Scobee, Warren Hastings Miller, Ruland V. E. Waltner, Thomson Burtis, Magruder Maury, F. St. Mars, Raymond S. Spears, John Webb, Clyde B. Hough, Georges Surdez, William Byron Mowery and others; stories of viking-farers in prehistoric America, Chinese bandits in the South Seas, cowpunchers on the Western ranges, gold-seekers in Alaska, gamblers in Mexico, wolf-baiters in the snow country, witch-doctors in Peru, desert riders in Morocco, gunners' mates on the Pacific, Army fliers on the Border, smugglers in Chinese waters, doughboys in the Philippines, knights-at-arms in medieval France, adventurers the world around.

What do you really think of your wife's pie-crust?



A GOOD pie-crust covers a multitude of domestic sins. If a woman gives a man good pie and good coffee he will soon tell the world she is a good cook. Good pastry isn't hard to make, but she must know—not experiment; measure—not guess.

It's all so easy—this business of cooking—with The New Butterick Cook Book, simple as a primer, complete as an encyclopedia.

Can You Carve Turkey Properly?

Charles Faissolle, maître d'hôtel of the Ambassador Hotel, New York, shows you with pictures the correct way to carve a turkey. In The New Butterick Cook Book you are also told how to carve roasts, fish, steaks, legs, saddles and even roast pig.

Are Any of Your Children Under Weight?

Inadequate lunches have been found to be one of the most frequent causes of undernourishment and underweight in school children. In The New Butterick Cook Book, school lunches both hot and cold are treated with the completeness and thoroughness this important subject requires.

This cook book has been revised and enlarged by Flora Rose, co-head of the Cornell School of Home Economics, assisted by members of her faculty and with the cooperation of Martha Van Rensselaer, head of the Cornell School of Home Economics.

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Unusual Recipes

En casserole cooking, made-over dishes, meat substitutes, appetizers, garnishes—these are all found in The New Butterick Cook Book.

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Butterick Building, New York

Dept. L

Please send me a copy of The New Butterick Cook Book for which I will pay the postman \$2.65 (\$2.50 for the book—15c for postage) when it is delivered to me. My understanding is that I may return this book after 5 days and have my money refunded if I am not fully satisfied.

Name

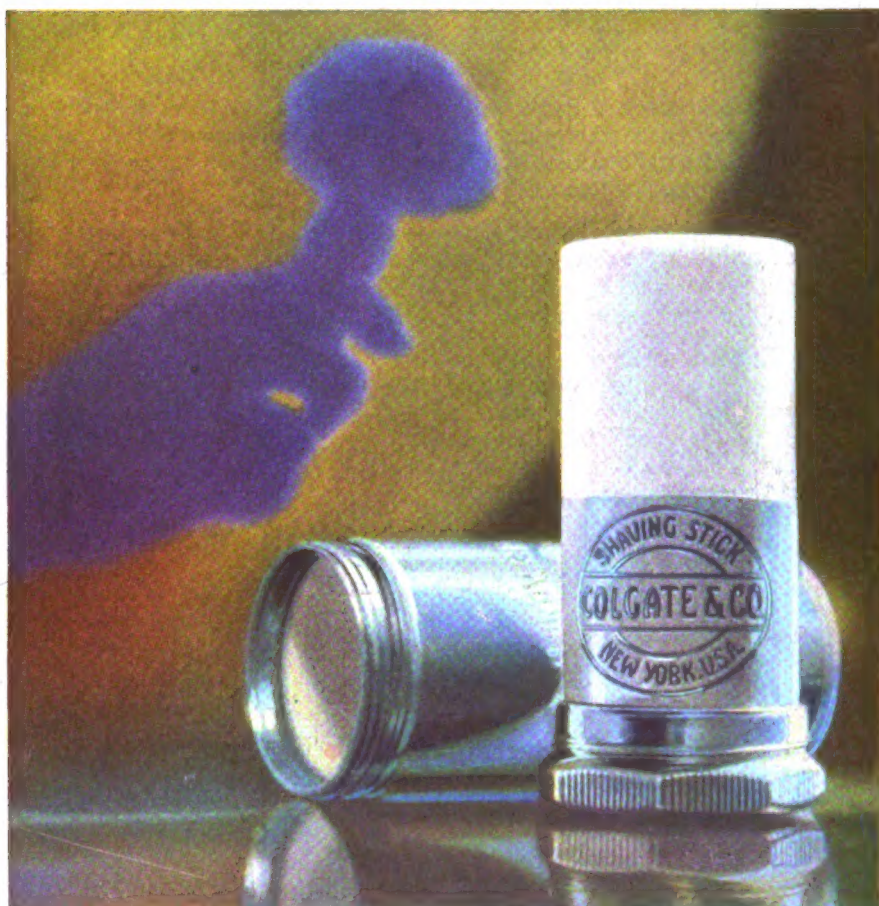
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City State

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The famous "Handy Grip", with a trial-size shaving stick in nickel box, sent for 10c. When the trial stick is gone, buy Colgate "Refills" for the price of the soap alone, 25c.

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